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By Mary Crawford. NCTA News

Hershey cowboy is Aggie of the Year

CURTIS, Neb. – Clayton “CJ” Monheiser led his Class of 2020 as the Aggie of the Year in graduating from the Nebraska College of Technical Agriculture.

The livestock management major, a humble cowboy from Hershey, Nebraska, would likely cite friendships forged and his work with cattle, horses, and stock dogs as Aggie highlights.

To his classmates, teachers and campus administrators, however, they most enjoy and appreciate his ethics, personality and can-do attitude.

“CJ has shown to be a diligent student, reliable RA, and an overall assiduous person,” wrote Erika Arambula, Residence Life manager, in the annual award nomination.

“He is someone that when there is a job that needs to be done, he will do it.”

That perseverance and caring attitude was echoed on May 6 by NCTA Interim Dean Kelly Bruns in the NCTA Awards Program, held virtually on social media.

“Aggie of the Year is based on academic achievement, campus involvement and, most importantly, leadership at the campus level,” Bruns noted.

“His nominator said, ‘I’ve seen him step up in the past year not only as an RA but working on campus when others may have not chosen to do so.’ CJ has been working on the NCTA Farm which has also helped us out immensely,” Bruns said.

In addition to being a resident assistant and student employee with the farm, Monheiser was active in NCTA Collegiate Cattlemen.

He also was president of the NCTA Stock Dog Club and traveling team, and was named the Outstanding Competitor for the team on awards night.

“CJ has done such a wonderful job for us in so many ways and he has come so far with his stock dog training, we’re just so proud of him,” said Judy Bowmaster-Cole, veterinary technology professor and faculty sponsor to the stock dog team.



NCTA “Aggie of the Year” CJ Monheiser of Hershey, Nebraska, at right, competed at the National Western Stock Dog Trials at Denver in January, with his dog, Addie. (NCTA / XP Ranch Photography)

She coaches Aggie students in dog obedience class and coordinates the NCTA Stock Dog Team along with volunteer coaches Kelly Popp and Eddie Merritt.

“CJ has learned enough about training his dogs for working livestock in a stress-free manner that he will be able to take them home and they will be good helpers to him along the way,” she said. “That just really makes us proud.”

In 2019, Monheiser served a summer internship at Adams Land & Cattle in Broken Bow.

“I wanted to work in a backgrounding or feedlot setting, applied and got the internship. I really appreciated that opportunity to gain more experience,” said the 2018 graduate of Wallace High School.

He also has worked with his uncle in cattle backgrounding work, rides horses, trained a colt this semester in the NCTA Colt Starting class, and is training a second stock dog.

This summer Monheiser is working on a Nebraska ranch furthering his livestock management experience.

“My goal is to eventually own my own cattle and work for myself.”

Part of the University of Nebraska system, the Nebraska College of Technical Agriculture is a two-year institution with a statewide mission of preparing students for successful careers in agriculture, veterinary technology and related industries. NCTA is known for its affordable tuition, high job-placement rate for its graduates, and for the success of student teams in competitive activities including crops judging, ranch horse events, livestock judging, shotgun sports, stock dog trials, and intercollegiate rodeo. The college is consistently ranked as one of the best two-year schools in the nation.

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