



NEBRASKA COLLEGE OF TECHNICAL AGRICULTURE

July 13, 2021
By NCTA News

Teachers gain tips at boot camp

By Mary Crawford, NCTA News

CURTIS, Neb. – Tips to experienced and newer agriculture teachers could benefit six classrooms or agricultural science labs this fall, in part, due to an Ag Mechanics Boot Camp in Curtis.

Teachers from Nebraska and Kansas schools brushed up on skills, curriculum ideas and some peer-sharing sessions in a three-day camp at the Nebraska College of Technical Agriculture.



Small engines was one of the half-day sessions of the Ag Mechanics Boot Camp at the Nebraska College of Technical Agriculture. Six educators gained hands-on teaching skills from Dan Stehlik, NCTA instructor (blue shirt, second right). (Photo by Andela Taylor / NCTA)

The instructor was Dan Stehlik, a longtime high school FFA advisor and agriculture educator, who joined NCTA faculty in 2015. Boot camp skills shared included hydraulics, small engines, and electricity.

“The main thing I got out of the camp was Dan’s practical approach to teaching for the classroom,” said Brent Thomas, in his second year in a two-teacher program at Superior Public Schools. “Dan makes sure that what he explains and how he teaches the teachers then translates to our kids.”

Stehlik’s experience prompted Thomas to take the course. At Superior he primarily teaches industrial technology courses in welding, engines, construction (woods), plus plant science.

The NCTA alumnus majored in ag education, was on the crop judging team and active in campus clubs. He earned his bachelor’s degree from the University of Nebraska-Lincoln. After student teaching at Pender Public Schools, he headed for Superior.

“I got put in charge of setting up our FFA district’s ag mechanics CDE’s (Career Development Events),” he said. “Since he works with the CDEs for State, I reached out to Dan for help on that. He mentioned doing a boot camp this summer, so I hopped on.”

Curtis native Madison Clark completed a master’s degree in agricultural communications in 2021 and starts a teaching assignment this fall at Norris High School.

“The boot camp was an excellent experience to learn and grow more in an area I was not previously very knowledgeable in,” she shared. “As agriculture instructors we have to know many different areas of ag and technical areas well enough to be able to teach them. Any chance to expand those skills like we did at NCTA is helpful to be able to take back to the classroom.”

At Norris, she will serve in a two-teacher team, as well.

“I personally enjoyed the electricity part of the boot camp the most,” Clark said. “I can see how applicable these skills are in careers and I’m excited to be able to share what I learned with students this year.”

Shauna Roberson teaches agricultural education at Garden County Public Schools in Oshkosh.

“It was a great overview of hydraulics, electricity, and small engines,” she said “I got some needed resources and lab ideas for my students. I really enjoyed getting to stay on campus and learn about NCTA’s programs of study.”

The all-inclusive boot camp included lodging at the residence halls and meals on campus. Evening sessions focused on peer-sharing discussions.

Along with Stehlik, dialog was beneficial with NCTA professor Doug Smith, who previously taught agriculture and served as FFA advisor in Texas high schools prior to coming to NCTA in 2011. Smith is animal science and agriculture education professor, plus Aggie livestock judging coach.

“We were able to learn and talk through topics with our peers,” Thomas said. “That’s helpful since the playing field is different as an agriculture teacher.”

Stehlik shared curriculum resources such as exams, worksheets for lab sessions and other FFA materials.

Since NCTA’s campus is the site for many regional Leadership Development and Career Development Events each semester, FFA members and teachers are fairly familiar with NCTA, Stehlik said.

“It’s always good to have our alumni back on campus, but also to expose newer teachers and those in other regions to our degree and certificate programs,” he said. “We hope to offer similar summer workshops in the future.”

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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