

March 24, 2017

By Mary Crawford, NCTA News

## **Aggies dig landscape challenge in Utah**

Curtis, Neb. – The mountainous beauty at Provo, Utah, inspired an agricultural trio from Nebraska in a unique test of their collegiate training.

Three students from the Nebraska College of Technical Agriculture in Curtis ranked 16<sup>th</sup> of 57 college teams which competed in the 2017 National Landscape Collegiate Plant Installation last Friday.

“It was beautiful. Mountains surround Provo and it made for some truly awesome scenery,” said Heath Buchanan, NCTA student from Douglas, Nebraska. “A tough competition but it was fun.”

Buchanan, a diversified agriculture student with a minor in agribusiness, was one of eight NCTA students in the national activities conducted at Brigham Young University in Provo.

There, they were among the 672 students representing 62 college teams and two FFA teams (winners of the national FFA Nursery and Landscape CDE), who competed in a career fair and 28 different skills events.

From NCTA, Buchanan ranked the highest individually (121<sup>st</sup> of 672) in cumulative points, also entering categories for Compact Excavator Operation, Tractor Loader Backhoe Operation, Woody Ornamental Plant ID, and Truck and Trailer Operation.

Buchanan’s teammates in the landscape installation were Andrea Burkhardt of Winnetoon, Nebraska, and Alyssa Novak, Eldorado, Nebraska. Soon-to-be graduates, Burkhardt is a horticulture major who will continue in the profession, and Novak will receive her degree in livestock management with minor in agribusiness.

Individually from NCTA, Dalton Johnson, a sophomore agronomy major from Gering, Nebraska, was second placing 156<sup>th</sup> overall, with Burkhardt 176<sup>th</sup> and Novak in 181<sup>st</sup> place.

Brigham Young University won the team championship.

For college students, the contest is a pinnacle for competitions but also for networking with professionals from the landscaping industry such as garden centers, nurseries and all phases of “green space” management, said Tee Bush, NCTA associate professor in horticulture who also is sponsor of the NCTA Horticulture club, coordinator of the new NCTA Recycling Initiative, and coordinator for the NCTA-Curtis Community Garden.

“This national competition is the biggest networking opportunity available in the green industry. No other collegiate event like this exists, anywhere,” said Bush.

“We had some exceptional individual achievements in addition to the plant installation team, from Alyssa Novak scoring 10<sup>th</sup> of 82 in Business Management, and John Paul Kain earning 11<sup>th</sup> of 54 in Skid Steer Operations.”

Skills contests and green industry events are annually hosted by the National Association of Landscape Professionals, Inc. A career fair featured more than 90 companies.

Andrea Burkhardt was awarded the Glowacki Family Scholarship at the 2017 NALP Foundation Recognition Reception held in conjunction with the conference.

The 2018 contest will be hosted at Alamance Community College in Graham, North Carolina.

NCTA students and their events:

**Heath Buchanan, Douglas, Neb.** - Compact Excavator Operation, Landscape Plant Installation, Tractor Loader Backhoe Operation, Woody Ornamental Plant ID, Truck & Trailer Operation.

**Andrea Burkhardt of Winnetoon, Neb.** - Landscape Plant Installation, Annual & Perennial ID, Business Management, Flower and Foliage Design

**Rachel Dather of Verdigre, Neb.** - Construction Cost Estimating, Woody Ornamental Plant ID, Landscape Maintenance Operations

**Dalton Johnson, Gering, Neb.** - Construction Cost Estimating, Plant Problem Diagnosis, Turf & Weed ID, Landscape Maintenance Operations

**John Paul Kain, McCook, Neb.** - Skid Steer Operation, Turf & Weed ID, Truck and Trailer Operation

**Dalon Koubek, North Platte, Neb.** - Plant Problem Diagnosis, Maintenance Cost Estimating

**Alyssa Novak, Eldorado, Neb.** - Interior Plant ID, Landscape Plant Installation, Business Management, Maintenance Cost Estimating

**Cassie Predmore, North Platte, Neb.** - Interior Plant ID, Annual and Perennial ID

The NCTA Horticulture Club concludes spring semester activities with its annual plant sale of annuals, perennials and vegetable plants on April 29 and May 4. Additional information is available from Tee Bush at [tbush@unl.edu](mailto:tbush@unl.edu) or call 1-800-3CURTIS.

Online article: <http://go.unl.edu/292o>

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**Source:** Tee Bush, NCTA associate professor horticulture, 308-367-5226, [tbush@unl.edu](mailto:tbush@unl.edu)

**Writer:** Mary Crawford, NCTA News, 308-367-5231, [Mcrowford@unl.edu](mailto:Mcrowford@unl.edu)

NCTA.Horticulture.03.24.17



NCTA-Curtis students recently competed at the National Collegiate Landscape Competition in Provo, Utah. The trio of Heath Buchanan, Andrea Burkhardt and Alyssa Novak placed 16th of 57 teams in landscape installation. (NCTA Photo)