

April 1, 2016
By NCTA News Service

Students build pivot at NCTA

Curtis, Neb. – Irrigation technicians in a college program at Curtis are learning about pivot installation and trouble-shooting on a replica of a center pivot system.

Students in the Nebraska College of Technical Agriculture (NCTA)-Reinke Partnership Irrigation Technician Program are learning with hands-on mechanics.

Dan Stehlik, NCTA's agriculture mechanics instructor, picked up the smaller version of a functional center tower and three 12-foot spans, each with a different tower control box, from Reinke Manufacturing, Inc., at company headquarters in Deshler, Neb.

Five days later, students in the irrigation technology program had the unit mostly assembled in the NCTA shop.

"It is a great learning experience for the students," Stehlik said. "The uniqueness of this pivot will allow us to conduct activities year-round and with an element of safety since it's not as tall as a regular pivot, but we'll still provide all the learning for the basic wiring components found on a typical pivot and see if they work as the pivot travels its half-circle pattern. "

In addition to full-size pivots out in the NCTA Farm Laboratory, this unit gives students first-hand experience with wiring, gear boxes, control settings, trouble-shooting, and maintenance exercises.

Reinke leaders launched the technology program with NCTA a year ago, largely to educate technicians in a high-demand industry. They donated a new pivot at NCTA which was installed in 2014, and support the academic program with class materials, supplies, and equipment such as the teaching model.

The company also has an industrial plant at Belleville, Kan., where Stehlik served as an agriculture instructor at two area high schools for 19 years. He worked with Reinke personnel to train high school students for American Welding Society certifications the last nine of those years at Republic County High School, Belleville.

"Since I've been here at NCTA we have acquired steel and resources for the welding program from Reinke, and now we have this mini-pivot to work with in the mechanics laboratory," Stehlik said.

NCTA scholarships are available from Reinke's corporate group and can be matched by local dealers who plan to hire an NCTA technician upon completion of the 9-month program in Curtis. Or, the courses would also allow the student to "ladder" into a two-year associate's degree program.

Details on the irrigation program are available from Dr. Brad Ramsdale, NCTA agronomy and agricultural mechanics chairman at bramsdale2@unl.edu or call (308) 367-5225.

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NCTA.IrrTech.04.01.16

(Photos by NCTA/Stehlik)



1) Setting up pivot control tower



2) Assembling a first length of pivot tower

Photo cutlines:

- 1) Students assembling the pivot control panel are (clockwise, from top left), Kris Seberger of Lexington, Trent Holcomb of Grand Island, Aaron Doxon of Maywood, and Lucas Pistulka of Wilcox. (NCTA/Stehlik photo)
- 2) Assembling the first length of pivot tower are (left to right) Tre Norman of Oxford, Aaron Doxon of Maywood, and Trent Holcomb of Grand Island kneeling. (NCTA/Stehlik photo)