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By NCTA News Service

## **UNL students are Curtis Serviceship interns**

Two students with the University of Nebraska-Lincoln will be helping the City of Curtis and the Nebraska College of Technical Agriculture with unique projects this summer.

Jamie Mashino of Spencer and Courtney Ruda of North Platte are community interns through the Rural Futures Institute Serviceship Program. They are applying leadership skills during a 9-week project.

Curtis was one of five communities selected for the RFI program in addition to Cozad, Friend, McCook and Nebraska City. Communities applied in January to the Heartland Center for Leadership Development.

Teams of interns will be spending June and July working and learning from their host communities about rural business, entrepreneurship, public policy, marketing, leadership and civic engagement. UNL students received a 2-week training prior to arriving in their host communities.

Both of the Curtis interns were raised in rural areas and have first-hand knowledge of agricultural, 4-H and youth programs. Courtney Ruda is a junior at UNL in Child, Youth, and Family Studies with minors in psychology and business. She is a 2014 graduate of North Platte High School.

Jamie Mashino will graduate from UNL in December, 2017, in Agribusiness with minors in entrepreneurship and leadership. Her goals are geared toward rural banking or the financial industry. Both women are active in student organizations and volunteerism at UNL.

They will work in tandem on some projects or individually in their research and planning. Curtis City Manager Doug Schultz is project supervisor, and will direct them in multiple economic development assignments including research and planning for the new business incubator and building that will be constructed this year to house new businesses in the community.

At NCTA, the team will be advised by Tee Bush, assistant professor, in the subjects of horticulture, math and community service. Bush also has a long-standing interest in developing a comprehensive campus recycling program at NCTA. The goal will be successful application and funding of recycling grants to sustain a long-term effort.

The Medicine Valley Economic Development Corporation and City of Curtis are providing intern stipends. NCTA's in-kind contribution is campus housing, staff leadership and program resources.

"The college is pleased to be a part of this community-wide effort to expand opportunities and agriculture education here in Curtis, and to assist the serviceship interns in designing a comprehensive recycling program for our campus," said Jennifer McConville, assistant dean for finance and operations. "We are enthusiastic for another great partnership with the University of Nebraska colleagues at the Rural Futures Institute. RFI is very helpful to NCTA and to Curtis, such as helping with the Curtis Community Garden and sponsoring the Rural Futures Conference here at NCTA last October."

Community opportunities will engage the interns with organizations such as Rotary, Curtis Chamber of Commerce, NCTA academic advisory groups, Curtis City Council, Frontier County Extension and 4-H clubs, and some other public and education venues through the Frontier County Enterprise and social media.

In addition RFI and the Heartland Center for Leadership Development, other Serviceship partners are the University of Nebraska's Office of Student Involvement, Center for Civic Engagement, the Engler Agribusiness Entrepreneurship Program, the Nebraska Human Resources Institute, and the College of Agricultural Sciences and Natural Resources at UNL.

Ruda and Mashino can be reached through the City of Curtis office, on Facebook at Curtis RFI Interns or by calling NCTA at 1-800-3-CURTIS.

NCTA is a national accredited college emphasizing technical agriculture programs in agribusiness management, veterinary technology, animal and equine science, agronomy, agricultural education, agricultural mechanics and irrigation technology. Information is available at [ncta.unl.edu](http://ncta.unl.edu).



Courtney Ruda, North Platte, at left, and Jamie Mashino, Spencer, are Community Serviceship Interns with the City of Curtis and the Nebraska College of Technical Agriculture this summer. The University of Nebraska-Lincoln students launched their work in Curtis on June 1. (Photo credit: Mackenzie Kuhudzayi Photography)