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By NCTA News

## **College promotes recycling for Earth Day**

CURTIS, Neb. – Blue recycling containers started dotting hallways inside college buildings in Curtis this spring, thanks to a Keep America Beautiful grant dedicated to a new recycling initiative.

A campus-wide effort at the Nebraska College of Technical Agriculture encourages students and campus visitors to pitch in their beverage recyclables instead of sending them along with City of Curtis waste to a landfill, says Ron Rosati, NCTA dean.

“Agriculture students are preparing for a life dedicated to producing food in a manner that protects our natural environment. This is one more way for us to celebrate Earth Day in a manner consistent with our students’ dedication to the sustainable practices we see in modern production agriculture,” Rosati noted.

Horticulture and math professor Tee Bush promotes a conservation mindset with her horticulture and landscaping students, and as coordinator of the Curtis Community Garden at the NCTA campus.

“We worked on putting together recycling grants, and received impetus from research done by summer interns in 2016,” said Bush.

Two students from the University of Nebraska-Lincoln were selected by the University’s Rural Futures Institute to serve with the City of Curtis and NCTA in an RFI Community Serviceship program.

The pair lived at the NCTA campus and split their time between City projects and, with the help of Bush, compiled a campus recycling proposal for the college.

“The RFI interns looked at the waste stream going from campus into the City dumpsters, and the volume that the City transports to a landfill in Dawson County,” Bush explained. “They also helped us identify key areas on campus where the public and our students would need access to recycling containers.”

Last summer, they also helped the NCTA Horticulture effort with Frontier County Extension’s youth science camp and emphasized the importance of recycling.

“Everybody wants to be a good steward and recycle plastic beverage bottles, aluminum cans, newspapers, cardboard and paper from office waste,” Bush said. “The greatest challenge for NCTA has been the cost of recycling containers.”

Late last fall, Bush found a source of funding through the Coca Cola-Keep America Beautiful College Bin Program. The college applied for, and received, 25 of the large blue, 60-gallon containers for indoor use, plus the transportation costs for shipping 600 miles from Iowa to Curtis.

A small gift to the college helped buy five more of the containers in a matching-gift program to round out the initial investment of 30 containers.

Thus launched the recycling initiative in time for a bustling campus of youth tours, student recruiting and extra campus guests, Earth Day, and graduation week activities for May 3 programs and May 4 commencement.

A work-study student assists Bush and the NCTA Facilities Department with the initiative by collecting the recyclables, weighing the collection, and then transferring it to recycling containers for the City to transport to an out-of-town recycling center.

Curtis City Manager Doug Schultz coordinated the project with the RFI interns last summer in Curtis (population about 900), and continues to oversee the City's recycling operations.

"Our next goals are to obtain more grant funding to purchase a compacter for the City, or for campus, and to involve more community members in the effort," Bush said.

Also, discussions are underway to acquire outdoor canisters for the campus, and possibly for the city parks, swimming pool and public places such as the community center.

Those goals are longer-term, yet Bush and the NCTA team are hopeful more donors will step forward.

By the time of Earth Week in April, 2018, she hopes to report total volume collected by the NCTA campus community and have even better news to share.

Online article: <http://go.unl.edu/rvin>

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Tee Bush, horticulture and math professor, at the Nebraska College of Technical Agriculture, is coordinating a new recycling initiative at the college's campus in Curtis. (Craig Chandler photo)