



NEBRASKA COLLEGE OF TECHNICAL AGRICULTURE

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Stehlik wins national teaching award

By Mary Crawford, NCTA News

CURTIS, Neb. – Dan Stehlik is a lifelong learner and educator.

The Dorchester, Nebraska native and Curtis resident has taken what he's learned as a farmer, livestock producer and teacher in Kansas and Nebraska, and applied his "learning by doing" philosophy to 29 years of high school and college agricultural programs.

Stehlik approaches academic instruction with a 'we' attitude in that 'we all learn' together.

Last week, in New Orleans, Louisiana, Stehlik and the Agriculture Mechanics program of the Nebraska College of Technical Agriculture in Curtis earned national recognition.

The National Association of Agricultural Educators honored Stehlik with the 2021 NAAE Outstanding Postsecondary Agriculture Program award for Region III.

Along with Nebraska, Region III includes Iowa, Minnesota, North Dakota, South Dakota, and Wisconsin.

"Watching Dan and his Ag Mechanics program get recognized in front of more than 700 of his peers in agricultural education from across the nation was quite exciting," said Larry Gossen, dean of NCTA. "He represented NCTA and the entire campus community very well."

The postsecondary award is sponsored by Bayer as a special project of the National FFA Foundation. It includes a plaque and NAAE conference costs.

Success at state, nationals

In June 2020, Stehlik received a state postsecondary award from the Nebraska Agricultural Education Association, which then enabled his application at the next step, to national competition.

At NCTA, Stehlik teaches courses in welding, electricity, irrigation technology, small engines, industrial safety and equipment maintenance. He joined NCTA faculty in 2015, following 19 years in Kansas classrooms and FFA programs.

A product of Nebraska's land-grant university, Stehlik received his associate degree in Production Agriculture in 1975 from the University of Nebraska School of Technical Agriculture, predecessor to NCTA.

Stehlik returned to the family farm near Dorchester for eight years, applying skills gained at UNSTA. Then he continued toward a bachelor's degree at the University of Nebraska-Lincoln, graduating in 1986 with double majors in Agricultural Education and General Agriculture.

While there, an Ag Ed class in Supervised Agricultural Experience developed an interest in agricultural education and its application.

“My instructional classes had greater meaning to me with actual farm experience,” he says. “Educational theory recognizes the worthiness of laboratory or hands-on experiences on subject understanding and value.”

Stehlik taught agricultural education at Concordia (Kansas) High School and Republic County High School in Belleville, Kansas, for a combined 19 years. Also, he taught some evening welding courses at Republic County High through the adult education programs of Cloud County Community College.

He received an NAAE Postsecondary Education Award for Kansas teaching programs. Stehlik also held many state leadership offices in the Kansas Association of Agricultural Educators, as well as other agricultural organizations.

Return to alma mater

The Aggie campus restarted its shuttered NCTA Ag Mechanics program in 2012, and Stehlik returned to his alma mater in 2015. Rapidly, the program has expanded, due in large part, to Stehlik’s programs and industry contacts made in Kansas and Nebraska.

Today, highlights of the NCTA program includes:

- A two-semester Irrigation Technician Certificate for a program in partnership with Reinke Manufacturing Co. The program is one of two on center pivot technology offered in the U.S.
- A three-semester Welding Certificate with potential for students to take exams for an American Welding Society steel certification, a national industry-based standard
- High school FFA Career Development Events (CDE) in welding and ag mechanics for two FFA districts
- NCTA’s Stehlik and Dr. Doug Smith are co-superintendents for the annual Nebraska State FFA Agriculture Technology and Mechanics CDEs
- Tapping industry partnerships and resources with irrigation companies
- A Summer Ag Mechanics Boot Camp for high school instructors in 2021
- Proposals underway to establish adult or community-based education programs in the region

The NCTA program has been successful with program support through private donations and state or federal grants. These enabled technology investments such a robotic welder, large voltage wire welders to learn and train for aluminum welding certification, classroom upgrades, and a welding laboratory expansion.

Stehlik started an Ag Mechanics Club in 2021, serves as co-advisor of the campus Horticulture Club, serves as NCTA Faculty Senate president, and collaborates with the NCTA Farm Committee. Currently, he is secretary of the Aggie Alumni Association and has twice served as president.

Off campus, Stehlik is active in the community with the Medicine Valley Chamber of Commerce, Frontier County 4-H volunteer, on church council, entertains is a cowboy poet, is officer of the Nebraska Sheep and Goat Producers Association, and maintains a small livestock operation in rural Curtis.

NAAE conference

NCTA administrators Larry Gossen, dean, and Jennifer McConville, associate dean, also attended the NAAE conference in New Orleans. Dr. Brad Ramsdale, associate professor and unit lead of NCTA’s Agronomy, Agricultural Mechanics, and Agriculture Production Systems, wrote letters of support for Stehlik’s awards.

After attending national conferences while in Kansas, Stehlik enjoyed reconnecting with ag educators.

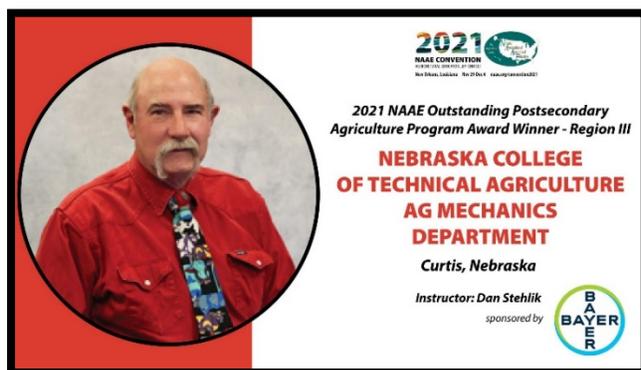
Another Nebraskan recognized by NAAE Region III is Toni Rasmussen, Wayne Public Schools FFA advisor and ag teacher. She received a “Teachers Turn the Key Scholarship”, which promotes agricultural educators in their first to fourth year of teaching.

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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Dan Stehlik, NCTA instructor, assists students in the welding laboratory. He was recently recognized for the Outstanding Postsecondary Agriculture Program by the National Association of Agricultural Educators at the NAAE convention in New Orleans. (George Hipple /NCTA photo)



Dan Stehlik, NCTA ag mechanics instructor, receives the National Association of Agricultural Educators award for Outstanding Postsecondary Agriculture Program in Regional III. (Courtesy photo)

Online article: <https://go.unl.edu/rd05>