



## NEBRASKA COLLEGE OF TECHNICAL AGRICULTURE

July 13, 2020  
By NCTA News

### Wills is campus, community good neighbor

CURTIS, Neb. – Mention Sandy Wills to folks in Curtis and they'll likely have been the beneficiary of one of her baked or handmade creations.

Last week, the Curtis native received the top staff recognition at the Nebraska College of Technical Agriculture with the NCTA "Excellence in Service Award."

"It was really a surprise when Mary Rittenhouse called my name," said the 25-year employee of the tech school. "I wasn't expecting this!"

From sharing banana bread, cookies, muffins and cabbage burgers with colleagues and residents of the small Frontier County town, Wills is known for her generosity and home cooking.

"Sandy is always a friend to everyone on campus," said Judy Bowmaster-Cole, a professor in the Veterinary Technology division. "She works tirelessly to make us all proud of NCTA, from wall to wall and even into the great outdoors. Sandy supports and is a trusted "ear" to students and they appreciate her gentle and friendly manner."

The annual award stems from nominations by NCTA faculty and staff and recognizes outstanding service to the college but also throughout Curtis, said Mary Rittenhouse, chair of the NCTA Agribusiness Management Systems division and the campus awards committee.

"Sandy is the backbone of our custodial service," said Barbara Berg, Vet Tech division chair. "She is always here, always working, always getting the job done. She is friendly and helpful to students. She is always willing to take the time to answer their questions, and to help them find where they need to go."

The Medicine Valley High School graduate was a custodian at her alma mater. Having taken some horticulture classes at the college, she added outdoor work at the high school in lawn and grounds care. Her role there expanded into some long evenings and weekends at events.

So, she made a change to a daytime shift and 25 years later at NCTA, she's met thousands of students.



*Sandy Wills, a 25-year employee of the Nebraska College of Technical Agriculture, received the 2020 Excellence in Service Award. (S. Nutter/ NCTA News Photo)*

An early riser, she's at the NCTA campus by 7 a.m., rain or shine, Monday through Friday. "I don't move as fast as I used to but I try to get everything done, and don't say no very often when someone asks for help."

She's been restoring the home left to her by her parents, Leslie "Deac" and Fern Wills. "Painting indoors is my therapy," she says with a chuckle.

"Call on Sandy if you need something cleaned, straightened or painted. She's really good at painting!" Bowmaster-Cole notes. "Sandy is one of the behind the scenes VIPs on this campus."

Wills also checks in on several elderly friends in the community each day, giving some rides to appointments and errands, and celebrates milestones for Curtis and NCTA friends.

Among her creations are special gifts such as a crocheted afghan for a friend undergoing health treatments, and knitted throws for new babies, customized with a horse and the child's name.

"Sandy is a very special person, indeed, to our campus and our community," Rittenhouse says.

# # #

Online: <https://go.unl.edu/2v7y>

By Mary Crawford, NCTA News

308-367-5231

[mcrawford@unl.edu](mailto:mcrawford@unl.edu)