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By Mary Crawford, NCTA News

Duty calls to NCTA Aggie graduates

CURTIS, Neb. – Work was beckoning Thursday for the valedictorian and salutatorian of the Aggie Class of 2017 at the Nebraska College of Technical Agriculture in Curtis.

Valedictorian Matthew Lundt of Correctionville, Iowa, said he needed to get home for spring calving and helping his family with corn planting so he opted to forego the walk across the commencement stage.

“We had more pressing matters at hand,” the dual major in agribusiness management and animal science said by phone Thursday afternoon. “We needed to be here at the farm.”

He and wife, Lauren, were leasing ground for the first time in their newlywed life, through a crop-share arrangement with his grandmother in Iowa.

The NCTA commencement drew 73 of the 80-plus agricultural and veterinary technology graduates, with several exiting immediately after the ceremony.

“We have a nine-hour drive tonight for the college rodeo tomorrow in Dickinson (North Dakota),” said Lexus Kelsch, an agribusiness graduate from McLaughlin, S.D. Kelsch and her horse, Tigger, will claim the Great Plains regional barrel racing title this weekend.

Closer to home, an irrigation technician job at his hometown of Lexington, Nebraska, a mere 45 miles from Curtis, is awaiting class salutatorian Kristian Seberger.

“I’ll be back there again next week,” Seberger said, of his job with Landmark Water, where he installs, services and repairs center pivot irrigation systems.

Nebraska’s center pivot irrigation providers have high demand for the technical skills required within the industry, said NCTA Dean Ron Rosati.

“Our graduates are well-equipped and prepared for the workforce after studying here at NCTA,” Rosati said. “I am quite proud of this class, one of our largest classes in several years.”

University of Nebraska Vice President Michael Boehm joined Rosati to confer the associate degrees and certificates to the graduates.

Boehm, who also is vice chancellor of the University’s Institute of Agriculture and Natural Resources, rallied students on stage for a pre-commencement awards program Wednesday night. There, Rosati declared Boehm an NCTA Aggie and presented him a customized NCTA belt buckle.

On Thursday, before a full house at the Curtis Memorial Community Center, University Regent Bob Phares of North Platte joined Boehm in urging graduates to savor their accomplishments and to appreciate all who gave a helping hand along the way.

In his keynote message, Nebraska Department of Agriculture Director Greg Ibach emphasized rewards beyond career, citing a sign in the Ibach home at Sumner.

“Be respectful, be helpful, be grateful, be smart, be kind, and be you,” he noted, listing traits which Ibach and his wife, Teresa, emphasized with their three children, all graduates of the University of Nebraska-Lincoln.

“My premise today is that I believe that to truly find satisfaction with any level of achievement you have to achieve quality of life, as well,” Ibach added. “You have to find satisfaction in your personal life as well as your professional life.”

Horticulture graduate Andrea Burkhardt of Winnetoon, Nebraska, was awarded the college’s top honor Wednesday night when named 2017 Aggie of the Year. She will enter a career in floral design and hopes to someday own and operate her own floral business.

Initiates were inducted to Phi Theta Kappa honor society Wednesday afternoon (<http://go.unl.edu/Odce>). A full listing of graduates, academic honors and scholarships will be available next week at the NCTA website, <http://ncta.unl.edu>.

This article is online at: <http://go.unl.edu/o4g2>

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Sources:

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Left: Jessa Lemon, Curtis, received her degree in agricultural production systems.

Center: Keynote speaker was Nebraska Dept. of Agriculture Director Greg Ibach of Sumner, Nebraska.

Right: Wade Vallery of Plattsmouth and Emilye Vales of DeWitt graduated Thursday with honors at the Nebraska College of Technical Agriculture in Curtis.

*Photos by Catherine Potter Hauptman and Mary Bargman Crawford, NCTA Office of the Dean
(Additional photo on the next page)*



University Vice President Mike Boehm, at podium, asked graduates to turn to the audience and thank those who assisted them in their academic endeavors. To the left of Dr. Boehm is Jennifer McConville, NCTA Associate Dean and University Regent Bob Phares. (C. Hauptman / NCTA photo)