



NEBRASKA COLLEGE OF TECHNICAL AGRICULTURE

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Alumni Achievement to Gary L. Troester

Gary Troester will tell you that a small, ag college in Curtis, Nebraska was the first of many steppingstones that led him 25 years later to southern California.

Farming for seven years at his family's farm near Hampton, Nebraska farm between two college degrees, two jobs with Cooperative Extension in Nebraska and South Dakota, a stint with the Natural Resources Conservation Service, and then an offer to become an ag lender for USDA's Farm Service Agency came in 2005.

"It's a very different type of agriculture in southern California," says the 1980 agribusiness alumnus of the University of Nebraska School of Technical Agriculture (UNSTA) in Curtis. "But, for me, it all started here in Curtis."

At Aggie Day in 2021, while he stood in the old college gymnasium where he played basketball for Coach Del Van der Werff, Troester was honored with the Aggie Alumni Association's Alumni Achievement Award, which recognizes exemplary service to the college or to Nebraska agriculture and natural resources.

"I think Gary's career highlights the unending possibilities of what an UNSTA or NCTA education affords," said David Fulton, Troester's classmate of 1980 and alumni association president. "What he learned at Curtis has carried him to ag careers in Nebraska, South Dakota and California. And this has enabled a lot of agricultural people to have financing to run their operations."

Today, Troester is the farm loan manager for 10 counties in Southern California. He offices in Bakersfield and San Maria, with customers producing crops of coffee, cattle, strawberries, avocados, vegetables, mushrooms, microgreens and now the popular urban gardening and farmers' markets entrepreneurs. The populated area of nearly 9 million people stretches to the borders of Mexico and Nevada.

He emphasizes communication skills with ag borrowers and strong background in agricultural production, both skills that he honed through professors at UNSTA (now the Nebraska College of Technical Agriculture).

Troester said he has great memories of his first college career, playing basketball for coach Del who also was his professor for human relations classes in communications and speech. He also participated in student government, swing choir and business club.

After UNSTA graduation in 1980, he farmed for seven years in Hamilton County, earned his bachelor's degree from the University of Nebraska-Lincoln, was an extension agent with 4-H programs, horticulture and general ag in Hamilton County and then in Webster, South Dakota for nine years before FSA called him to California.

“A wonderful part of my career going into ag lending it that you add things along the way, from where you started at UNSTA,” Troester said. “You add skills at each different thing, farming, cooperative extension, and now ag lending work. It’s just those steppingstones, and this is where it started.”

Nominations for Aggie Alumni awards are taken throughout the year to the Awards Committee. They are due by Nov. 11 to Dan Stehlik, secretary and awards chairs. Contact him at dstehlik2@unl.edu. See details at <https://ncta.unl.edu/aggie-alumni>

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Aggie Alumni Association President David Fulton of Pleasanton presents the 2021 Alumni Achievement Award to Gary L. Troester of Santa Maria, California. The two were 1980 graduates in agribusiness management. (NCTA photo)

Online link: <https://go.unl.edu/3a0u>