Writing my column on the computer this morning reminds me of how far technology has come in a relatively short period of time. The word processing program I am using has become an outstanding resource. It has so many features that I’ll probably never have time to take full advantage of all it has to offer. And so, it makes me wonder, are our LEAD alumni taking advantage of all the features that LEAD has to offer?

One of the benefits of being a graduate of our Nebraska LEAD Program is gaining access to a network of innovative and motivated people who are all leaders. This network includes classmates, alumni, speakers, investors, NALC Board members and staff members. They are the type of people who exude success. They are a valuable resource if you utilize them.

Being a member of LEAD’s alumni is like joining a health club. You could join and use only one of the weight lifting machines, or you could use all of the resources the facility has to offer. Needless to say, you’ll get better results when you take full advantage of all that is available.

How have you utilized the full benefits of your LEAD affiliation? Have you joined the LEAD Alumni Association? Did you attend the LEAD Alumni Conference this past January? Did you participate in the Leadership Summit this past March? Have you joined the Nebraska Agricultural Leadership Council? Did you attend the annual LEAD Banquet? Did you support a LEAD Alumni Dinner? Did you participate in the Summer Ag Adventure Tour? How are you expanding your network? Many alumni are finding that the two years they were in the program are just the beginning of a life-long partnership in success.

Another program benefit is confidence. When we survey our alumni about the impact the program had on their lives, confidence comes up as number one. We have the confidence to think anew, to venture into new opportunities, and to stand proudly and tell the story of American agriculture.

I’m convinced this word processing program could help me be a better writer. I know it has helped me become a better speller! I’m certain the Nebraska LEAD Program will help YOU become a better leader when you employ the full benefits of your leadership education.

We are once again recruiting our next class, and I ask each of you to help in our recruitment effort. The strength of our program depends on the strength of our applicant pool. We firmly believe that our participants learn as much from each other as they do from the many speak-
A Message From the Chair of the Board

Stephanie Liska

I’m amazed by all that I’ve learned the past six years serving on the NALC Board. I’ve learned the quality of our program, the intensity of the curriculum, the commitment of staff and the conviction of the Fellows who become alumni. The growth Fellows experience in understanding our state, our nation and most importantly our industry is amazing to watch. Even more impressive; the commitment of each Fellow to put what they learn to work in their communities and throughout our industry. As one of my final commitments as an NALC board member, I had the honor of addressing LEAD 37 on their final day of their program. I shared with them that their graduation is not the end of something, but the beginning of their commitment to lead where they can make a difference. The beginning means we all have the power to choose where we invest our time, utilize our talents and leverage our skills. We can make a difference because we are passionate about where we lead and how we engage. Nebraska is very fortunate to have the LEAD Program. Our industry is challenged and strong leadership can keep Nebraska agriculture thriving. Given my experience with LEAD, I am confident in our future no matter what else is uncontrollable in our industry. Because of LEAD Fellows throughout the state I am confident Nebraska agriculture will continue to innovate, change, grow and provide a new beginning for those who choose to be a part of our industry. For those you know who may be interested in LEAD please encourage them to apply. It is a program that makes people say, “I wish I would have done that.” Don’t let them, “wish they would have.” Encourage their beginning.

Thank You to Departing NALC Board Members

The Nebraska LEAD Program would like to thank Dr. Eric Brown, Jim Farrell, Carol Hudkins, Stephanie Liska, Dr. Brad Lubben, Dr. Ray Ward, and William Rhea, Ill for their dedication to our mission: “To Prepare and Motivate Men and Women in Agriculture for More Effective Leadership,” and for their years of service on the NALC Board.

Congratulations and Condolences

Congratulations to:
Sam (LEAD 35) and Megan Krueger on the birth of their daughter, Quinn Kay on November 1.
Nick (LEAD 33) and Kory Fowler on the birth of their daughter, Landry Jules on November 25.
Jessi (LEAD 32) and Brandon Doke on the birth of their son, Reed Alan on January 18.
Adam (LEAD 37) and Ashley Pavelka on the birth of their son, Asher Allen born on January 17.

Condolences
The Nebraska LEAD Program passes on our condolences to the family of Ron Pavelka (LEAD XXVI) on the passing of his wife, Kay; to the family of Monte Stauffer (LEAD XXII) on the passing of his mother; the family of Brent Steinhoff (LEAD XXV) on the passing of his mother; and the family of John Kreuscher (LEAD IV) on the passing of his father.

(Director’s Update, continued)

ers, travel seminars and other parts of our curriculum they are exposed to. A strong, diverse applicant pool allows our selection committee to seat a class that is purposefully chosen to maximize their collective learning experience. Regarding our annual campaign, we want to thank those of you who have renewed your membership in the Nebraska Agricultural Leadership Council and welcome those who have become members of the NALC for the first time. The NALC is the governing board of our Nebraska LEAD Program and your membership in the NALC provides direct financial support for LEAD. If you are not a member of the NALC, please join us as we work together in developing the next generation of agricultural leaders. Once again, I thank you for allowing me the honor and privilege to serve as your Director of our Nebraska LEAD Program.
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**Invest In A Bright Future**

Our Nebraska LEAD Program is one of the premier and longest running programs of its kind in the country. We’ve been working to enhance lives, educate agriculturalist, and build Nebraska’s leadership since 1981. Yet today, I look at our LEAD Program and wonder what the future holds. With the recent natural disasters and the many trade agreements scrapped or imperiled, many LEAD supporters will be reassessing where they allocate their hard earned dollars. I would make a case that our LEAD Program continues to be a good investment. Our alumni sit on and direct commodity boards, are senators, county commissioners, and sit on many local boards for churches, townships and schools. The NALC, LEAD’s governing body, and the LEAD staff are aware that our history of success does not promise us the same in the future. Supporters of LEAD must continue to give due diligence to the work of recruiting the best of Nebraska’s agriculturalists and agribusiness professionals for participation in LEAD. We must also invest in this program with not only our time and energy, but with our dollars as well. In this way, working and investing together, we’ll be looking into a bright future for Nebraska and agriculture.

**LEADing the Way!**

John Miller (LEAD IV) received the Nebraska Bankers Association’s Agri-business Recognition Award for his many contributions to Nebraska and agriculture.

Fred Bruning (LEAD IV) received the Bruning Award (named after his father, Nebraska banker Frank Bruning) from the American Bankers Association for his leadership and outstanding dedication to providing credit and financial guidance to farmers, ranchers and businesses in rural America.

Sheryl Kastanek (LEAD XXVIII) was named a finalist in the 2018 ServeNebraska Step Forward Award Finalist in the Lifetime Achievement Category.

Dave Murman (LEAD IX) was elected to represent District 38 in the Nebraska Legislature.

Ken Rahjes (LEAD XXVII) was elected to represent the 110th District in the Kansas House of Representatives.

Cindi Allen (LEAD XXIV) was named Assistant Secretary of State by Secretary of State Robert Evnen.

Bree DeNaeyer (LEAD 37) was appointed to the Cattlemen’s Beef Board by Secretary of Agriculture Sonny Perdue.

Lora Damme (LEAD V) was elected Chair of the Nebraska Community Foundation.

Nate Blum (LEAD 36) was selected as the Executive Director of the Nebraska Grain Sorghum Board and Nebraska Sorghum Producers Association.

Steve Tippery (LEAD XXVIII) and RealmFive Agriculture received the 2019 AE50 Award at the AETC Conference in Louisville, Kentucky, for developing one of the 50 best products for advancing the food and agriculture industries.

Dan Stork (LEAD XXIV) was appointed to the Board of Directors for the Nebraska Agri-business Association.

Tracy Zink (LEAD 35) was elected to the Middle Republican NRD Board of Directors.

Ryan Reuter (LEAD 31) was elected to the North Platte NRD Board of Directors.

Dan Watermeier (LEAD VII) was elected to the Nebraska Public Service Commission

Dr. Terry Hejny (LEAD XX) was honored by the Nebraska Agribusiness Club as the 2018 Public Service to Agriculture Award recipient and for being honored by the UNL Honor Society for Agriculture, Gamma Sigma Delta as the recipient of the 2019 Award of Merit for Distinguished Achievement in Agriculture.

Bryan Barrett (LEAD XXVIII) was elected Chair, Cindi Allen (LEAD XXIV) was elected Vice Chair, and Royce Schaneman (LEAD XXI) was elected Secretary of the Nebraska Agricultural Council. Nicole Bohuslavsky (LEAD 34) and Raymond Morse (LEAD 35) were elected to their first term on the NALC Board of Directors.

**My First Year**

Since joining the LEAD Program office in April, 2018, I have met so many new people and learned so much. I met LEAD 38 at their very first seminar and LEAD 37 at their very last. And I met many of you at the banquet in March. I recently attended middle school orientation with my oldest son. As the principal was talking about all the different classes and programs the school offers to help the kids find their interests and develop their strengths before heading off to high school, I thought of LEAD.

I’ve been lucky to be able experience second-hand what the LEAD Program has to offer. LEAD provides a broad range of information and experiences to each class of Fellows. They gain local, national, and global perspectives on not only agriculture, but political, social, and cultural issues as well. I look forward to reading what the Fellows have to say after each seminar. It’s clear that LEAD graduates leave the program better prepared to serve their communities.

p.s. Now it is time to recruit LEAD class 39. If you know someone who could benefit from the LEAD Program, please encourage them to apply and let us know so we can reach out to them. Applications are due by June 15.
With much anticipation and excitement, Nebraska LEAD Class 37 along with Dr. Hejny departed Omaha on January 5 as we began our International Study/Travel Seminar to the Netherlands, Belgium, Germany, and Poland. After a four-hour layover in Detroit, we landed in Amsterdam at 5:45 a.m. (local time) on the 6th of January. Once we cleared customs and immigration, we met our guide, Mathilde Gerardts, who would be with us for the next 10 days. Later that afternoon we met Wayne Bacon, with the U.S. Grains Council who would travel with us in the Netherlands.

Within the Netherlands, also known as Holland, we visited Amsterdam, The Hague (their government town), and Rotterdam (a port city). The Netherlands has beautiful architecture. Every building is unique and you can see in because they don’t use blinds or window screens. In their port city of Rotterdam, we were enthralled by their engineering genius of moving walls that rise above the water to keep the country from flooding if waves get too high. Most of the country is below sea level. They continually build their land mass by using dikes and canals.

Since our government was experiencing a shutdown, we were unable to participate in our planned embassy visits. This gave us the opportunity to visit a greenhouse where roses were grown. We learned about their open market bidding process of selling roses, the new technologies being implemented and their transportation challenges. This was a highlight of the Netherlands for many in our class.

On January 8, we departed The Hague traveling by motor coach for Brussels, Belgium. Brussels is the “center” of the European Union. We visited the Parliamentarium, European Parliament’s Visitor’s Center to the European Commission. In visiting with several government officials and NGO’s, we tried to wrap our minds around the political concepts and groups involved in the makeup of the EU and how that relates to country government and regional government within those countries. They say it’s simple, but for us it seemed very complicated. Much of the talk was on “Brexit” and what that might mean for the EU. Many of the people we visited with had questions for our group about “the wall” here in the United States.

The most difficult thing we encountered while traveling in the Netherlands and Belgium was the bathroom situations. Who knew that figuring out how to use soap dispensers and bringing your toilette coins would be so challenging?

On January 10 we departed Brussels for Harsewinkel, Germany, for a visit to the CLAAS manufacturing headquarters. CLAAS is a family-owned business that was started in 1913, and produces combines and tractors. CLAAS exports 80 percent of their farm equipment to 140+ countries. The company is learning to be international, which includes dealing with multiple languages and cultures. CLAAS cites worldwide communications and logistics as the company’s biggest challenges, and sales and manufacturing in Russia as their biggest opportunity. We were able to meet with Maury Salz, President of CLAAS — Omaha, who made our visit possible.

From Harsewinkel we traveled southwest to Cologne, Germany. Cologne was heavily damaged during World War II and although parts of the city look centuries old, it’s really a re-creation of how the city looked before the war. Our time in the Rhineland Region of Germany included a visit to Bayer Crop Science – the largest agricultural research and development company in the world. We also met with Farmer Willi, Germany’s “most famous farmer.” To get a scope of the history, Farmer Willi’s house was built in 1742 and it is not uncommon for farm families to go back 11 generations. Farmer Willi and his neighbor formed a cooperative and grow sugar beets, barley, wheat, grapes and potatoes. Farmer Willi is most famous for his activism in educating consumers about the struggle to meet consumer demands.
Farmer Willi escorted LEAD 37 to the Hambach Mine, the largest man-made hole in the world where brown coal is mined. Germany gets 30 percent of its electricity from coal, and in the region near the mine there are at least four coal-fired power plants. Germany, and the European Union as a whole, are working to be more “green” by establishing renewable energy (windmills, solar, biogas, etc.), and plan to phase out coal-fired power plants.

The ideas of sustainability and reducing waste were easily observed throughout our travels. Disposable cups, plates, utensils and drinking straws were non-existent in the Netherlands, Belgium and Germany. Food and drinks, even in casual settings, were served using glassware and silverware. Beverages, including soda and water, were served in glass bottles. If you purchased a plastic soda bottle at roadside stop you would be charged an additional 0.25 Euros for the recycling fees associated with plastic. In the United States, we face issues with single-use products that continue to pile up in our landfills, the European Union sets a great example of how lifestyle changes can reduce waste.

We departed the city of Cologne for the Marcus Holtkotter farm, near Altenberge, in the North Rhine-Westphalia region of Germany. Marcus grows winter wheat, winter barley, corn, and canola and runs a 300-sow operation that produces about 9,000 fattening pigs each year. Much of Germany follows the patrilineal tradition of farm transfer in which the eldest son inherits the entire farm. Germany has strict environmental and animal care standards and Marcus may spend up to 10 hours each week on paperwork. He faces many of the same challenges that our U.S. farmers face in terms of educating consumers about how food is grown. Marcus belongs to the largest “maschinenring” association in Germany. Farmers pay a small fee to belong to their local association, where they find support in the form of shared machinery and farm help during times of illness.

The German government plays a large role in the business, education, and economy of the country, with policies that encourage green innovation and infrastructure. By 2050 the country plans to be completely supported using renewable energies. Nineteen livestock producers participate in a “Bioenergiepark” cooperative. The Bioenergiepark, located on an old ammunition storage facility creates energy from solar, wind and gas from local manure. The energy produced supplies 17,000 homes using existing infrastructure. Also located on the grounds, but not related to the Bioenergiepark, is a food waste collection plant. Food waste from across Germany is turned into compost to be redistributed onto farm fields.

We then traveled to Osnabruck where we spent the night. Osnabruck, the fourth largest city of the state of Lower Saxony, has a population of 168,000 inhabitants. The next day was Sunday, so the day was spent catching up, resting, and relaxing.

Our first stop on Monday morning, January 14, was at the University of Applied Sciences in Osnabruck. We met with faculty and students of the Agricultural Sciences and Landscape Architecture Department. In Germany students only pay about 340 euros (roughly $385 USD) per semester in administration fees to attend college; a stark contrast to tuition and fees students pay in the United States. The government pays professor salaries.

We then made our way to Wolfsburg to visit Autostadt Wolfsburg, the famous headquarters of Volkswagen. Our guided tour took us through the pressing, bodywork, and final vehicle assembly areas of the plant. A few numbers: the population of Wolfsburg is 145,000, and 73,000 of those residents work for Volkswagen (15,000 in research and development). Each day over 2,000 tons of galvanized steel are pressed into 480,000 various car parts, some passing through up to six steps to form the final shape. One press weighs up to 50 tons, exerts 7,700 tons of pressure. The factory is 90 percent automated, with more than 4,000 robots, and 6,000 bicycles for employees to use to get around the plant. Each car body has 45,000 welding points; a complete stamped-to-finished car takes two days. Volkswagen has 120 production plants worldwide. 10.8 million vehicles were sold last year; more to China than all of Europe. Due to its immense size, we saw less than 1 percent of the entire factory. We then traveled to Berlin where we spent the next two nights.

Berlin, is a very international and multicultural city with many international businesses headquartered there. We started Tuesday at ECF Farm Berlin which is a “City Farm,” or urban agriculture company. ECF has 10 employees, consists of a 1,000 sq. meter greenhouse and 13 fish basins on the site of the former malt factory of the Schultheiss Brewery. The greenhouse grows basil and produces 8,000 pots a week for Berlin’s supermarkets and around 400 kilograms of tilapia. Basil is very popular in Berlin as Italian food is the number one foreign food consumed in the city.

The 1.3 million euro greenhouse began as a hobby and the goal was to have smaller greenhouses built out of shipping containers. However, this “hobby” then expanded into the site at the old brewery. The ECF city farm is a model for urban agriculture in many other regions such as Brussels, Belgium, and also rooftop greenhouses in the Swiss Alps.
ECF tries to use the aquaponics model, which in theory uses a loop of water cycling between the fish basins and the plants. However, the pH between the two systems are different and causes some challenges. Also, Germany’s cloudy winter weather demands blue and red LED lighting be used to supplement Mother Nature. Although this facility is local and renewable, it is not organic production. The fish would only qualify as organic if they are from open water and the basil would have to be grown in soil.

Traveling on, we made a quick stop to visit what is left of the Berlin Wall. After the wall fell in 1989, a section of it remained to serve as a reminder of the past, as a place to for local art and as a tourist attraction. We stopped where we could walk along and see the artwork on the east side and on around to the west side to see the less attractive graffiti.

Checkpoint Charlie became famous during the Cold War as a crossing point from West Berlin to communist East Berlin. The Berlin Wall Museum shared the history of East and West Berlin. There were many stories of people risking their lives to cross the wall to reunite with family and stories of people escaping from other communist countries. Displays also touched on the atrocities of authoritarian leaders and the harm they caused their citizens.

Later that afternoon we met with the Young Entrepreneurs and Executives Group. In order to become a member, one must be under the age of 40 and belong to the chamber of commerce. This is an independent organization that has been mandated to represent and promote the Berlin economy and industry. The group provides networking opportunities, legal advice, funding options, education and training in various business fields. One of the presenters was part owner of Dropnootix and works with dairy cows. It produces a sensor that is placed in the cow’s rumen. This sensor collects information on body temperature, rumination activity, standing and laying time, and water intake. While the Young Entrepreneurs and Executives Group is a very “urban” organization, it was satisfying to see the services and assistance they provided to company that was very “rural.”

After dropping off our guide, Mathilde, at the Berlin Airport, we began our travel towards Poland. Upon arriving in Posen, we met our guide, Tomasz Skrzyczczak. We enjoyed a lunch of homemade pierogies at a traditional Polish restaurant and then enjoyed a walking tour of the city.

Posen is the capital of Western Poland. Western Poland, especially the area around Posen, is the most economically developed part of the country. Western Poland was under German rule while the east was under Soviet rule. The Germans invested in this area economically, educated the people, encouraged the use of the German language, consolidated small farms into larger ones, and set up a more entrepreneurial atmosphere. Thus, this area became the economic and industrial hub of the country. The Soviets on the other hand, manipulated Eastern Poland in order to control it so it would not be a threat. The Soviets kept the people uneducated, split the farms up into smaller parcels, encouraged farms be divided up between siblings, and in general just kept the people in poverty. This division is still seen in the country today along these geographic lines.

During our tour, we visited Freedom Square, where a 1956 demonstration/riot took place and more than fifty protesters were killed. This event, and others spurred Budapest into the Hungarian revolution. We also visited the medieval Old Town Square where the wealthiest businesses and historic town hall building are located. The clock tower in the city square featured the two goats butting heads at noon, which is the symbol of the city.

The morning of January 17 we traveled 15 kilometers south to the Wielkopolski National Park. It is one of the 23 national parks in Poland. The park was created to conserve the 7,500 hectare glacial landscape formations that are core to the area. There are another 50,000 hectares of buffer zone around the many round hills surrounding the park. Other defining features include long narrow hills and long valley lakes. The highest point in the park is only 132 meters above sea level. The park contains over 3,000 species of insects; trout, pike and eels are found in its rivers and lakes; and has over 40 mammals and over 190 bird species. A notable feature of the park is an abandoned castle located on one of its islands. The park is visited by over 1,000,000 people each year. Visitors are not allowed to wander freely in the park and must stay one of the seven marked trails. The park’s visitor center was quite interesting for us. It had many of the fauna and flora of the park mounted on display. The Wielkopolski National Park and Educational Center also had historical importance as a German Third Reich officer used the building as his residence. He was cruel to the Polish people and executed many citizens. In fact, Poland’s last public execution took place at this site.

That evening, we visited Onix, a family company started after the fall of communism. Onix is a fruit and vegetable farm and wholesaler. Although they raise some of their own produce, they outsource the vast majority. They process and distribute over 1,000 tons of fresh food per month. Many of their crops are seasonal. While we were visiting, potatoes were being processed. We saw very little sorting by hand and most of the cleaning being done was by automation. The quality of the finished product was very good. The potatoes were much cleaner than what we find here in the U.S.

The next morning, January 18, we departed Posen and drove 300 kilometers to Warsaw, the capital of Poland. Upon arriving in Warsaw in the late morning, we visited the Bronisze Market.
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The average farm size in Poland is about 10 hectares with many below that size. When Poland joined the EU, the farmers became eligible to receive subsidies. Subsidy amounts vary depending on the type of product produced, location of land, etc. and starting amount is 800 Polish Zloty/hectare or approximately $85/acre. Some small farmers rent their land to larger farmers. Subsidy money is divided or kept depending on the agreement between the two farmers. Bronisze doesn’t foresee a significant challenge other than the competition of pricing by big discount stores. Prices at this market are not fixed, they are negotiable and are dependent on buyer/seller agreement, amount of product, season and etc.

In the afternoon, we visited the University of Warsaw Dairy Research Farm. Cattle are grouped by how much milk they produce and in the first barn were cattle that produce a minimum of 40 liters per day. Most cattle get fed once a day except in the first barn which are fed twice a day because they are the most productive. Feed rations include: corn, wheat, canola, corn silage, vitamins, fat, beet roots/sprouts.

Cows at this facility produce 11,200 liters in a 305-day period. They keep all the heifers and sell the steers to other farmers to finish out. The dairy barns are about 50 years old. The farm has 13 employees, who earn 4,500 to 5,000 Polish Zloty/month ($1,186 to $1,318). The employees are from Poland and the Ukraine. That evening during dinner, we received a briefing on environmental protection and regulations from the office of the Chief Inspectorate of Environmental Protection.

On Saturday morning, we visited the POLIN Museum of the History of Polish Jews. The Hebrew word Polin in the museum’s English name means either “Poland” or “rest here” and relates to a legend about the arrival of the first Jews to Poland. The museum is located on the site of the former Warsaw Ghetto. Later, our guide Tomasz led us on a walking tour of the Warsaw city center. In mid-afternoon, we traveled to the Rooster’s Village. The Rooster’s Village is an agritourism venture that began in 2004 and is located on 4 hectares of land just outside of Warsaw. It provides services for kids ages 6 to 12; hosts winter, summer, and themed camps and is a very popular farm for Warsaw residents. It is convenient for parents because of the close location to the city. In spring and summer the animals are outdoors. During the peak season up to 300 kids visit during the day, they accommodate up to 100 kids for overnight stays and employ 20-25 people. Besides the farm animals, other activities include sport programs, playground and etc.

That evening we enjoyed our farewell dinner and then packed our luggage for a very early morning departure for the airport to begin our journey home. On Sunday, January 20, we departed Warsaw for Amsterdam, enjoyed a short layover and then departed for Minneapolis where we enjoyed our last lunch with LEAD Fellows at the airport while conversing about our observations overseas. We arrived in Omaha in the late afternoon on the very same day!

Nebraska LEAD Group 37 would like to express its appreciation to the Nebraska Agricultural Leadership Council and its Board of Directors, Vice Chancellor Mike Boehm and IANR-UNL, Dr. Hejny, our many donors and sponsors, our families and friends, and our entire LEAD family for making our international study/travel seminar possible. Thank you!
Our Bold Beginnings

My earliest memory of the LEAD Program is when I was 5 years old and my dad, Tom, left for three weeks (which is a long time when you’re 5) to travel to Spain, Morocco, & Egypt with LEAD X. Since then, both my mom, Linda, (LEAD XXVIII) and brother, Alex, (LEAD 34) have participated in the program, and it was more or less understood that one day, I, too, would be in LEAD. But no matter how much you hear about the program and the relationships you form as a LEAD Fellow, I can tell you there is no substitution for the experience itself! I’m so grateful to have the opportunity to learn and grow as an ag professional, but even more than that, I’m grateful for the relationships I’ve formed as part of this program. As a LEAD Fellow, you get to meet people from many different backgrounds (from bison ranchers to hops growers). In the end we’re all connected by agriculture, and so far I have loved sharing this journey with and learning from such remarkable people.

-Becky Schwarz, Bertrand

When reflecting on my first year of the LEAD Program, two attributes stand out that I have received thus far: exposure and servant-leadership skills. Our seminars not only take us to new locations, they also expose us to new ideas and ways of thinking. Those new exposures allow us to see first-hand how an event “there” can have an impact “here” and vice versa. As for servant-leadership, a leader is only as effective as the amount of respect they earn from the ones they are leading. What better way is there to earn respect than by simply serving others? I look forward to another year with my classmates and what the future has in store for us upon graduation.

-Michael Dibbern, Cairo

In my first year of the Nebraska LEAD Program, I have been exposed to numerous points of view on a wide array of topics. The local, state and national issues we have learned about have given me a new perspective and challenged me to search my own thoughts. It has also made me ask myself how I can make a difference. The knowledge and experiences I have gained so far have given me the confidence to take action in my own community and to grow those relationships into a greater involvement at the next level. The LEAD Program has truly motivated me, as it is designed to do. I am humbled at how blessed I am for such a great opportunity to learn and meet many new friends along the way.

-Tony Shrotherberger, Grant

Being chosen as a Nebraska LEAD Fellow is an unbelievable honor that has presented me with one-in-a-lifetime experiences and challenged me to develop and hone new skills. This program has spurred me to become a better public speaker, to hear and internalize the vantage point of others to whom I would not normally be exposed, and to be a better statesman, both for agriculture and agri-businesses as well as all of Nebraska.

As a transplant to Nebraska, this program has educated me in a way nothing else could as to how unique the state is and how much it has to offer. When I was growing up, I fully admit that Nebraska was not on my list of states where I hoped to live in the future. Today I cannot imagine living anywhere else, and Nebraska LEAD has only reinforced my certainty that this is the state I want to call home.

Thanks to the Nebraska LEAD Program, I have immersed myself in a wide range of social, political and economic perspectives at the local, state and national level. This is the kind of information that is essential to being a statesman in today’s diverse society, and it has driven me to ask myself how I can help ensure rural Nebraska’s voice is heard.

I look forward to developing an answer to that question while continuing to bond with the rest of the Nebraska LEAD 38 Fellows. They have quickly become some of my dearest friends, and I look forward to spending more time with them during our second year in the program and continuing our relationships for years to come.

-Lindsay Forepaugh, Kimball

A Pictoral History of Program Directors of the Nebraska LEAD Program

A rich and continuous history of outstanding Program Directors building and fulfilling Nebraska’s agricultural leadership needs, through a seamless, quality and internationally recognized program of agricultural leadership education, for a period of time spanning nearly four decades.

Left to right:
Dr. Allen G. Blezek, 1984-2007, Executive Director and International Dean of Programs of Agricultural Leadership.
Dr. Terence A. Hejny, 2007-present, Executive Director and Internationally Recognized Mentor and Role Model For Agricultural Leadership Program Directors.
Congratulations LEAD 37

March 15, 2019, the following Nebraska LEAD 37 Fellows received their program completion certificates.

Thaddeus Baum, Lincoln  Megan Grimes, Lincoln  Ted Retzlaff, Eagle
Luke Beckman, Elgin  Kyle Ann Hopkins, Gering  Sam Schmidt, West Point
Kristi Block, Lincoln  Evan Janzen, Aurora  Scott Sorensen, Cairo
Jerry Boeck, Exeter  Jamison Jensen, Lincoln  Scott Speck, Gothenburg
Amber Burge, Gothenburg  Aaron Kavan, York  Christopher Stillahn, Scottsbluff
Miles Buskirk, Alliance  Jason Keiser, Cozad  Kim Stuhr, Springfield
Ross Daake, Merna  Cory Kudlacek, David City  Aaron Troester, O’Neill
Bree DeNaeyer, Cherry County  Chelsea Luthy, Cody  José Valles, Kearney
Clay Govier, Broken Bow  Adam Pavelka, Hastings  Daniel Vech, St. Paul
Adam Grabenstein, Farnam  MerleAnn Raichart, Benkelman

Thank You 2019 Banquet Sponsors

We extend our thanks to:

• Nebraska Agribusiness Club  • Omaha Agribusiness Club  • LEAD III

for supporting the Nebraska LEAD Program by underwriting a portion of the cost of the Annual Recognition Banquet. Their continued, generous support allowed us to hold a fine dinner program to honor our LEAD 37 Fellows.

Thank You Banquet Table Sponsors

Orthman Manufacturing  Boeck Seed Services  LEAD Alumni Association  Union Bank & Trust
Boehringer Ingelheim  Glen Govier & Sons, Inc.  Nebraska Agribusiness Club  Wells Fargo Agribusiness
Frontier Cooperative  Kamler Family Farms  Nebraska Soybean Board
LA Farms - A&K Grabenstein  LEAD III  Omaha Agribusiness Club
Applicants Wanted

To apply for Nebraska LEAD Class 39

The application deadline is June 15, 2019.

The 2019 Allen G. Blezek Friend of LEAD recipient, Dr. James Horner, of Naples, Florida, with his wife, Connie, and Dennis Nun, President of the Nebraska LEAD Alumni Association. Thank you, Dr. Horner, for your role in founding and directing the Nebraska LEAD Program and making it one of the top programs of its kind across the country today.

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