For many of us, spring is a chance to emerge from the winter doldrums and set lofty goals, both personal and professional. For the Nebraska LEAD Program, spring is when our educational programming ends and we focus on recruitment and raise funds for the next year. This year is no different, but . . . we ended the “year” in a most unusual way. Because of the issues surrounding COVID-19, the second day of LEAD 38’s final seminar was cancelled, as was our Annual Recognition Banquet. However, we were able to send off LEAD 38 and spouses in grand fashion with a dinner sponsored and hosted by Don and Donna Hutchens. LEAD 38 is another great group and I expect big things from each one of them in the future.

Also, while LEAD 39’s final seminar of year one, “Panhandle Agriculture: The Land & People” was also cancelled, our Panhandle “campus coordinators” are working diligently to provide LEAD 39 a virtual learning experience.

This past October, I attended the annual meeting of the International Association of Programs for Agricultural Leadership. This organization is comprised of the directors of over forty LEAD-type programs from across the country and abroad. This meeting is an opportunity to receive training on program development, current issues facing the agricultural industry, and to develop relationships with enhanced networking opportunities. I presented a program to my colleagues on “Transitions: Support Staff, Director, Administrator, and Board Member.” I was also quizzed by my colleagues, who were seeking our “trade secrets” and “secret ingredients” for our program success. Vice Chancellor Boehm refers to this as the LEAD “recipe.” Long-time LEAD Director, Dr. Allen Blezek handed off the “recipe” to me when I became the LEAD director in September of 2007: “Work hard on programming, finance, selection, and public relations, have high expectations for your participants and your board of directors, and select individuals with Nebraska roots.” This “recipe” has allowed us to continue the legacy of leadership development for our industry and state.

I also believe that our selection process has a lot to do with our success. Our participants are carefully screened three times in our process to ensure that only those individuals with the highest potential, who are willing to stand up to the test of the program are selected. All candidates are required to complete a written application, seek out four written references, participate in an interview with a screening committee of local leaders before being screened by a statewide screening committee. The selection process culminates with a final review and approval by the board of directors.

We are once again recruiting our next class, LEAD 40, who will begin in September of this year. I ask each of you to help in our recruitment effort. The strength of our program (continued on page 3)
A Message From the Chair of the Board

Black Swan Event: A black swan is an unpredictable event that is beyond what is normally expected of a situation and has potentially severe consequences. Black swan events are characterized by their extreme rarity, their severe impact, and the widespread insistence they were obvious in hindsight.

I think we can all agree that COVID-19 fits the definition of a black swan event. It’s created incredible fear and uncertainty across the world. Its impact will continue to be felt long after the threat of infection subsides. The pace of change in regard to new information is staggering and is certainly unprecedented in my lifetime.

It’s also demonstrated the need for effective planning, adaptability and leadership. Federal, state, and local leaders have been working overtime to address public safety and prevent the spread of the virus. The ability of individuals and leaders to anticipate and adapt to these changes goes a long way toward determining the success of the planning.

How do leaders develop the experience to lead in times of uncertainty? Many of these leaders have had formal leadership training and experience in programs like the LEAD Program. The LEAD Program excels at preparing fellows for the future. LEAD Fellows have the opportunity to network with great leaders within the industry and government, as well as to hear from a variety of speakers to expand their knowledge; and occasionally change their opinions. LEAD Fellows often pursue new opportunities as a result of having participated in the program. LEAD is incredibly successful at developing leaders for new opportunities and positioning them to be more successful.

I would like to thank you for your continued support of the Nebraska LEAD Program. Without your support, LEAD would not be as effective or well respected as it is. I would encourage you to challenge someone to apply for the LEAD Program. Who do you know in your community or business that could contribute to and benefit from the LEAD Program? Who do you want to help succeed? Whose life and career do you want to change?

Be safe and take care of yourselves and each other.

Sincerely,

Bryan Barrett

Thank You to Departing NALC Board Members

The Nebraska LEAD Program would like to thank Cindi Allen, Bryan Barrett, Galen Frenzen, and Royce Schaneman 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 to our board. Without the volunteer service of individuals such as these, ours would not be among the elite leadership development programs in which we are currently counted.

Congratulations and Condolences

Congratulations to:
Kris Beckler (LEAD 30) and Alan Kocian who were married on February 20, 2020.
Nora Turner (LEAD 35) and Tom Jensen who were married on February 22, 2020.
Zack (LEAD 39) and Taylor Jenner on the birth of their son, Jones Matthew on October 28, 2019.
Brad (LEAD 33) and Renae Heinrichs on the birth of their son, Hudson Wayne on November 1, 2019.
Seth (LEAD 35) and Nikki Davison on the birth of their daughter, Sutton Jane on November 19, 2019.
Blake Bierman (LEAD 35) and Rebecca Black on the birth of their son, Harrison Wade on November 24, 2019.
Andy (LEAD 35) and Becky Jobman on the birth of their son, Adam Steven on December 19, 2019.
Michael (LEAD 38) and Rozy Dibbern on the birth of their daughter, Claire Harper on March 2, 2020.

Condolences
The Nebraska LEAD Program mourns the loss of . . .
John Dvoracek (LEAD XXI) who passed away on December 13, 2019 . . .
Jim Paulson (LEAD VII) who passed away on December 24, 2019 . . .
Jamie Bauman (LEAD 30) who passed away on February 5 . . .
Jordan Nun (LEAD 35) who passed away on March 15.

In addition, we pass on our condolences to the family of Kelli Shaner (LEAD 30) on the passing of her father; the family of Tim Graff (LEAD XX) on the passing of his father; the family of Lori Cox (LEAD 38) on the passing of her father and her daughter; the family of Tony Likens (LEAD XIX) on the passing of his father, the family of Dennis Nun (LEAD IV) on the passing of his son and the family of Craig Buescher (LEAD V) on the passing of his father.
There are only two kinds of people in this world...... I think we have all heard or read this dozens of times in different forms.

I saw one on a t-shirt recently, “There are only two kinds of people in this world: those who can extrapolate from incomplete data”

At the start of the COVID-19 pandemic, social media posts and news reports seemed to point to another two kinds of people. Those who hoard toilet paper and Clorox Wipes and try to resell them at inflated prices, and those who go out of their way to make sure their more vulnerable friends, family, and neighbors have what they need.

Of course, as with any of these, most people fall somewhere in between. Now would be a good moment, since many of us have a little extra time for reflection, to think about which side of that spectrum we want to be on.

Mistakes, unless caused by hubris, are not weakness. They show we’re taking action. They show we’re trying, learning.

We all make mistakes. No one enjoys eating humble pie so we’d like to think that we learn from our mistakes and not just how to avoid the them, but also what we could do better next time. Sometimes we learn that we need to ask for help or input from others with more knowledge and experience. Sometimes we need to slow down and be more methodical.

Mistakes do not always occur in regard to action or inaction. We can hold mistaken attitudes or thoughts. This is why it is so important to seek out and truly listen to diverse information sources and viewpoints. Then, those really wanting to go deeper will need to get uncomfortable and take a real look at where our misconceptions originated.

Leaders will make mistakes and hold mistaken ideas. Leaders worth following, who are strong within themselves own, acknowledge, and learn from their mistakes - they take corrective measures and they examine and re-frame their wrongly held ideas.
2020 International Study/Travel Seminar to Costa Rica and Brazil

By Troy Mack, Haley Miles, Dennis Hoppe, Aaron Weismann, and Veronica Waddell

T

here was a great deal of excitement as we began our journey on Sunday, January 5. LEAD 38, along with Dr. and Mrs. Hejny departed Omaha for an early flight to Atlanta. After a short layover, and a 90-minute delay, we departed arriving in San Jose a little later than expected. Clearing customs and immigration, we then met our guide, Edward who would be with us during our time in Costa Rica.

After checking into our hotel, Edward led us on a walking tour of the local barrios (neighborhoods) surrounding our hotel. The locally produced chocolate, coffee, and wine tastings were a treat! During our conversations with Edward, the most surprising thing we learned was Costa Rica has no military. The evening ended with a traditional meal and a presentation by TECHO, a group of young people working towards the dream of ending poverty, through the joint action of its inhabitants and young volunteers.

Due to the remodeling of the U.S. Embassy auditorium, we enjoyed a series of presentations the next morning, January 6, at our hotel. Our day started with greetings and remarks from U.S. Ambassador Sharon Day. Her professionalism and passion for helping the people of Costa Rica were evident. Some were surprised to learn about all they do to improve the lives of the people of Costa Rica.

We also met with Anita Katial, Foreign Agricultural Service/Regional Agricultural Counselor, Costa Rica, Nicaragua & Panama; David Foran, Counselor for Political and Economic Affairs; Alejandro Gonzalez, U.S. Grains Council; and Geraldo Luna - U.S. Soybean Export Council. It was a great morning!

After a quick change of clothes from business professional to business casual, we traveled to the Center for Tropical Agricultural Research and Education (CATIE). Here we enjoyed lunch in the cafeteria that included rice and beans. We would consume a lot of rice and beans before we left Costa Rica! CATIE is an international entity with a unique combination of science, graduate education and innovation for development. They have a clear action plan for creating professionals with a distinct perspective who can also contribute to the sustainable growth of the communities.

The following day (January 7) we visited the CATIE Coffee Research & Plantation, discovering the importance of the research conducted to assist small-scale farmers. We enjoyed a walking tour of the CATIE Botanical Garden learning about their work with cacao, peach palm, macadamia, annatto, guava, other tropical fruits, and timber trees. The Botanical Garden is a beautiful place with an impressive array of different plants with healing characteristics and beauty. That afternoon, we visited CATIE’s Sustainable Tropical Dairy facility. Here we observed the process of milking and milk preservation using clean energy produced from waste generated by that industry. We were able to observe the research implementation that CATIE develops for sustainable livestock production, waste management, and pasture models that reduce the greenhouse gas emission. Our first impressions of Costa Rica were very positive, and we were delighted at how welcoming the “Ticos” were.

On the morning of January 8, we departed from CATIE and traveled to La Fortuna. La Fortuna is home of one of Costa Rica’s most popular tourist attractions, the La Fortuna Waterfall, the largest in the country. We enjoyed a delicious lunch in the community center, prepared by local women raising money for their youth band. We had the pleasure of hearing from ADIFORT, a local economic development organization. It reminded us that small communities face the same challenges everywhere and that creativity and civic engagement get things done. This group has raised funds to pave failing streets, construct a senior activities center with a swimming pool, and many other projects to boost tourism in the area. We then traveled to see the beautiful waterfall and later had the privilege to enjoy the natural hot springs in the area. This was truly a beautiful and breathtaking experience! We left encouraged at seeing rural community development in the area of Costa Rica.

The next morning (January 9), we departed La Fortuna, spending several hours traveling across the country to visit...
agriculture. The campus’ farms produce rice, sugarcane, and mangos (for both the local market and export), hay, and beef. We learned about Costa Rican agriculture’s use of precision agriculture. The researchers who visited with us, are looking for new ways to apply technologies for their diverse cropping systems.

We visited Ad Astra, a rocket company founded by Costa Rica’s first astronaut, Franklin Chang. This company is developing and applying technology for plasma propelled rockets. Through the development of the VASIMR® propulsion system, these rockets are fast and more efficient once in space! After lunch we visited a favorite stop: Tio Pelon. Tio Pelon is innovative and is the largest rice producer in Costa Rica. They have reduced their use of agrochemicals on their farms dramatically by investing in producing their own biological products to fight pests and diseases in rice - fighting bacteria with bacteria!

On the morning of January 10, we traveled to one of Costa Rica’s eleven sugarcane mills. Sugar is an important industry in Costa Rica. The company we visited, started producing organic sugarcane this year in order to meet their consumers’ demand. Our visit to this sugarcane mill, felt like a step back in time. We walked through the entire plant, walking across narrow walkways and stairs. Safety regulations in Costa Rica are much different than at home. Approximately 3,000 people are employed at this plant and we observed all parts of the sugar production process – from sugarcane being delivered from the field, to syrup production, to the loading of raw sugar onto trucks. After enjoying lunch at the historic Colonial Plantation House, we enjoyed a boat tour of the Hacienda El Viejo Wetlands. Here we saw crocodiles, iguanas, as well as many unique birds. Back at the Colonial Plantation House we observed a demonstration on the beginning of the sugarcane industry and its importance to Costa Rica. Our hosts demonstrated the use of gears to crush sugarcane, powered by oxen. We were also able to experience a traditional Costa Rican meal as we made our very own corn tortillas, enjoyed traditional pour-over coffee, and many other foods. This was a great experience! The Costa Rican culture is full of pride and warmth. We will not forget this journey!

January 11 was our last full day in Costa Rica and included a stop at the Las Pumas Rescue Center, which began in the early 1960’s as a response to deforestation of the Guanacaste region. This rescue center for animals housed four species of monkeys (howlers, white, squirrel and spider) which all can have a 25 to 30-year life span. These monkeys will eat almost anything and are very intelligent including being able to hunt in teams. The center also included macaws, which can live up to 90 years and many parrots, which can have a 50-year life span. In addition, there were pumas, ocelot cats, and jaguars - which are the only cats that can hunt crocodiles. The Rescue Center also cares for a whitetail deer and a collared peccary (small pig). These two animals have become good friends, even taking naps together. After our visit, we traveled back to San Jose and enjoyed a farewell dinner at the Sikwa Restaurant. We experienced several dishes and drinks with an indigenous Costa Rican theme. The owner and his chefs were very proud of their culture and the food experience they were able to bring to us.

Early on the morning of January 12, we departed San Jose, Costa Rica, had a short layover in Panama City, Panama, and then it was on Sao Paulo, Brazil. After clearing customs and immigration, we were greeted by our guide, Eduardo, who would be with us for our visit to southern Brazil. Sao Paulo is the 5th largest city in the world, evident immediately to us on our bus ride to our hotel.

After an early breakfast, we were off to visit the U.S. Consulate in Sao Paulo. A consulate is like an embassy, only smaller in scale and located outside of the capital, but aligning with similar missions. We received briefings from Adam Chubb, Consulate General, Nicholas Rubio, Director of the Agricultural Trade Office, and Osvaldo Seco, U.S. Wheat. We were very fortunate to receive presentations relative to economic and agricultural situations in Brazil. Brazil is composed of 27 states and Sao Paulo is similar to New York in that most of the big banks reside there. It’s also the industrial capital and the “gateway to ag” in Brazil. The current economic policy in Brazil is much more conservative than years past and is much more willing to work with the United States. Brazil is a relatively new democracy with the current constitution being only 32 years old. Unemployment is around 11% and several steps have been taken to liberalize the market. We learned that China is extremely active in Brazil with considerable investment including a bank in Sao Paulo. The greatest challenges to Brazil are corruption, protectionist tendencies, judicial overreach, and states’ rights and evolution of power. We had a great experience and enjoyed the discussions at the consulate.

In the afternoon, we traveled Campinas and visited several huge coffee fields at Tozan, a Japanese company. Their rotation is 20 years of coffee followed by one year of soybeans, then back to coffee. There are several pest challenges and like any agricultural operation they utilize unique methods like wasps to control different pests. We were able to see a historical demonstration of cleaning the coffee beans, as well as taste some excellent fresh coffee! They were very proud to show off their 200-year-old tree. We also had our first of many excellent experiences of Brazilian BBQ for lunch. We completed the day back in Sao Paulo with a visit to UNICA, a private lobbying group for the sugarcane industry. It was interesting to learn that the infrastructure in Brazil isn’t feasible for electric car integration, therefore ethanol seems to be the longer-term fit. GMO sugarcane was approved in 2019 and corn ethanol increased 90% from 2018 to 2019. Brazil has a much higher concentration of ethanol in their blends than the U.S. We found it interesting that they do not use the by-product from corn ethanol for anything, as compared to the high feed value that we use it for in the U.S. Almost all beef cattle are grass finished. The ethanol must be sold to distributors and then to pump stations.
We had an early morning drive to a dairy farm the next day in the Sao Carlos region. The farm we visited has six sheds where they house 1,800 cows that are milked three times per day, resulting in 60,000 liters (15,850 gallons) of milk every day. They milk 60 cows at a time and 300 in one hour. They have 4,000 cows total on the property, but only 1,800 are milked. We also toured their processing facilities as they process, package, and market their product. We were able to taste their many flavored milk products as well as fresh yogurt. After lunch (at an “all you can eat” Brazilian BBQ) we visited EMBRAPA, a research facility/farm. EMBRAPA, is much like Extension in Nebraska. At this facility, research is conducted on livestock systems and efficiencies. One study they are conducting consists of planting eucalyptus trees in rows and then growing crops in rotation between the rows. When it’s time for the rotation to be in grass, they will graze the cattle there. They are looking for changes within the cattle when they are in shade most of the day.

It was another early morning on January 15, as we traveled away from Sao Paulo to meet with the NB Group, a forage equipment manufacturer. The NB Group caters to the smaller farmers and manufactures silage choppers, hay equipment, grain bagging equipment, and more. The NB Group management shared information about their company as well as information on the highest and lowest hectares per tractor/combine in the top producing countries in the world. This highlighted the need for improvement in Brazil’s agricultural fleet. They also shared with us, the needed world food production estimates for the year 2050 that was quite eye opening. Following the presentation, we toured their manufacturing facilities. After lunch, we made our way back to Sao Paulo for a late afternoon flight to Cuiaba. After collecting our luggage and departing the Cuiaba terminal, we were greeted by 100° plus temperatures and our guide, Elder, who would be with us in the Mato Grosso region.

LEAD 38's final days of International Travel Study Seminar were spent touring the state of Mato Grosso (MT), Brazil. We drove through towns that had only been in existence for less than 40 years, visited a large farm and a mid-size farm, a cotton cooperative, and a cotton research center, and learned about agribusiness in Mato Grosso and Brazil. Topics repeatedly touched on included research, electricity and energy, transportation, and land usage. Future trends in these topics were discussed as well as comparisons to the United States. The state of Mato Grosso totals 90.3 million hectares. Of this land, 64.7% is conserved and protected, 25% is pasture, and 10.3% is used for agriculture.

On the morning of January 16, we departed Cuiaba for Campo Verde and the farming region of Mato Grosso. Also, accompanying us were our friends from the USDA-Foreign Agricultural Service: Jenia Ustinova, Agricultural Attaché - U.S. Embassy in Brasilia and Curt Reynolds, Crop Analyst - Washington, D.C. After a couple of hours, we ascended a plateau and stopped for coffee at a restaurant that offered some amazing panoramic photos of the valley below. Soon after, we entered the farming region of Mato Grosso. On one side of the road there were soybeans ready to harvest and on the other side of the road cotton was being planted where beans had just been harvested.

Mato Grosso’s climate is tropical humid. Farmers can produce two harvested crops a year on a single parcel of land. Since it never freezes, they have an abundance of diseases and pests, causing the cost of production to increase as these must be continually controlled via chemical and biological means. Larger organizations, which are under more public scrutiny, are more apt to seek the biological solution and call it sustainability, than are the mid-size organizations, which don’t have the public eye on them, but must keep up production.

We learned that in Mato Grosso, the crop year begins in September. Typically, the first crop in is soybeans as soybeans are more efficient and profitable than corn. Depending on weather and planting conditions, either corn or cotton will follow the beans. Farmers prefer to plant cotton as it is more profitable than corn, although corn offers more flexibility around various planting conditions. According to UniCotton, 20% of cotton farmers will plant cotton as a first crop. The climate in MT is very conducive to cotton. The cotton is then harvested between June and August. After cotton harvest, a cover crop such as millet or grass is planted and then used as animal feed. In September the process begins again.

In December/January, the soybeans are sprayed with Paraquat to dry, are harvested, and then a planter follows the combine, planting directly into the leftover stubble. Due to soybean rust, Brazil has enacted legal restrictions on the planting of soybeans, making it illegal for them to be grown for a three-month period (June 15-September 15). Farmers will be fined if they have soybeans in the field during this time. We saw birds in...
the fields that looked like ostriches, called the greater rhea. The farmers have a good relationship with these birds because they can eat 5 kg (11 pounds) of insects per day. On the drive we saw a single field with six combines harvesting beans and two planters running directly behind them. We saw multiple cotton gins as well, with many cotton bales waiting to be processed. Sadly, we also saw a wreck between a car and a grain truck, which apparently is a common occurrence.

Our first stop was at Bom Futuro’s soybean storage facility. Bom Futuro is the world’s largest soybean producer. The facility we visited can store 3.3 million bushels of soybeans. Eucalyptus trees are grown on site, harvested and then chipped for use as fuel for their soybean driers. The average field size is 3,700 acres. Bom Futuro is also the largest John Deere customer worldwide. We were told the farm has 7,000 employees and owns 500 trucks with double trailers, 70 combines and over 200 tractors and other implements. Bom Futuro also owns 130,000 head of cattle that they finish. The operation is owned by 3 brothers and their brother-in-law. The four of them homesteaded here almost 40 years ago. As other homesteaders left the area, they were able to grow the size of their farm. They have a fish farm on sight called the Philadelphia Farm. There are 34 ponds, each the size of 2 hectares (almost 5 acres), and process 10,000 pounds of fish daily. Most of the processed fish are marketed in Brasilia. The farm has its own elementary school with teachers paid by Bom Futuro and provides bus service to the high school every day. Bom Futuro has developed their own seed company. The farm also produces most of the feed for their livestock.

Mato Grosso claims 10 head of cattle for every 1 person, but currently only about 20% of farms have both crops and cattle. This number is expected to rise. Feedlots account for just 5% of cattle production. Traditionally, they have not been very efficient because grass grows naturally at a rapid rate. The main breed of cattle in Brazil is Nelore, characterized by their long legs and distinct hump over the top of their shoulder and neck. Nelore cattle thrive on grass, but the future sees more pasture being converted into crop production as Black Angus genetics are introduced. Black Angus tolerate confinement better than Nelore, but Brazil is too hot and humid for them. Intercrossing the two is allowing farms to intensify their livestock land use with systems of confinement, semi-confined, and pasture supplementation.

We learned the government of Brazil is becoming less invested in agricultural research. Due to government instability and corruption, Brazilians typically do not listen to the government. Instead, farms and cooperatives prefer to do their own research. There are also many private non-profit organizations conducting research. Electricity is very expensive, and often costs more to consume during the day than during the night. Many farms are electing to produce their own from resources produced on-site. This lowers cost, increases efficiency, and leads to more self-sustainable operations. For example, a sugarcane plantation can create electricity by burning the leftover biomass, and a dairy can recycle animal waste to produce methane gas for generating electricity. Like in the United States, the government has a heavy hand in directing what is to be used for vehicle fuel. Unlike the U.S., which favors fossil fuels, Brazil legislates in favor of the biofuel ethanol. More ethanol is being made with corn rather than sugarcane, because corn is easier to obtain.

We discovered that transportation is one of agriculture’s greatest challenges in Brazil. As commodity production has boomed in South America’s “heartland” over the past 30 years, the infrastructure has struggled to keep up. There are few routes that cut across the country and through the jungles and rainforests, and many of the roads that do exist are not paved. It was only recently that the most dangerous truck route of them all, one that drops greatly in elevation as trucks leave the heartland, was paved. Highways account for a little over 60% of Brazil’s national agricultural transport, while in the United States, it’s only 10%. Here in the U.S., railway and waterways each account for 45% of the total, while in Brazil these modes come in at 21% and 14%, respectively. While infrastructure may currently be Mato Grosso’s greatest weakness, it also offers opportunity for new road projects, railways, and waterways to be developed. Some large farming operations, such as Bom Futuro, are taking matters into their own hands by building and paving their own roads.

During our time in the state of Mato Grosso, we also visited a smaller farm (3rd generation, 35,000 acres, 200 employees, growing soybeans, cotton, corn, cow-calf and feedlot), UniCotton (cotton cooperative) and EMBRAPA (research facility focusing on cotton) near Primavera Do Leste, Iguacu Máquinas Agrícolas (John Deere dealership) in Campo Verde, and Mato Grosso State Institute of Agro Business Economy in Cuiaba.

The current Bolsonaro administration endorses agribusiness, but history shows this trend is not guaranteed to last. Despite challenges caused by lack of good transportation infrastructure, lack of government funding and research, expensive electricity, and land use regulations, agriculture in Brazil has a bright future. The challenges faced bring opportunity for farms to pave their own way ahead. For them, being able to fund their own operations, is all part of the sustainability initiative. On-site research brings knowledge on what works best for their operation. Workers are educated and skilled. Efficiency, productivity, and sustainability are the priorities for the future. Brazil’s agricultural resources, mindset, intelligence, and drive will make this nation a key player on the global stage for a long time to come.

On Sunday, January 19 we began our long journey home. We departed Cuiaba in the late morning for Sao Paulo and departed Sao Paulo late in the evening, flying overnight and arriving in Atlanta on the morning of January 20. We arrived back in Omaha early in the afternoon.

Nebraska LEAD Group 38 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. Terry and Pam 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!
The LEAD Program has given me a new perspective and appreciation for government, agriculture and the great state of Nebraska. The experiences, opportunities and friendships I have made have been truly invaluable. So far throughout this journey, I’ve been reminded of the profound impact “public service” has to our communities.

Let’s be a steward to our communities and put our differences aside. This passage is adapted from the Steward’s Prayer: “Our communities will be friendly, if we are. Our communities will be vibrant, if we help make them vibrant. Our communities will give back, if we are a generous giver. Our communities will grow, if we invite and bring others in.” I challenge LEAD Fellows and alumni to take a look at your own community and become all the things you want your community to be. We were not chosen as LEAD Fellows to return to our communities and become stagnant. Let’s help our communities thrive and use the tools we gained from the program to make a difference for tomorrow’s Nebraskans!

Molly Trausch, Holdrege

When I applied for the LEAD Program I was not fully aware of the impact it would have on my life. After being in the LEAD Program for a few months I can tell you that my experiences have already exceeded my expectations. The relationships I have developed with the other Fellows and leaders around me are hard to describe in words. I know that they will be life-long friendships and will help me become a better version of myself.

The national travel seminar really opened my eyes and broadened my outlook on various topics of interest. For me the most enlightening was that grass roots still causes action to be taken on topics and that starts by being involved locally. Bringing these experiences from our seminars back to my own personal and work life has been the greatest reward. I find myself able to speak up more and voice my opinion and am heard. I find myself growing into the leader I’ve always wanted to be.

The LEAD Program has allowed me to be more open to the perspective that others have. I am truly grateful for this opportunity and know that this is just the beginning of a very memorable and dynamic journey.

Travis Harrison, Lincoln

Our Bold Beginnings

One thing I’ve heard over and over is “embrace each seminar and enjoy the time and the people during your seminars because it goes by quickly”. As our first year is coming to a close, I am finding that to be so true. It’s been such an honor to part of the LEAD Class 39. This program has exposed us to so many opportunities, experiences and people throughout the state and nation.

My mother-in-law, Sandra Koinzan, was in LEAD Class V and my husband, Ryan, was in LEAD Class 30. After my husband completed LEAD, I always hoped I’d have the opportunity to go through this program. In January 2019, I sold my business and started working on our family feedlot, farm and ranch, and our children are at the ages where they are more self-sufficient so I decided now might be a great time!

My goals when I joined the Nebraska LEAD Program were to improve my leadership skills, become more educated on agriculture issues, and develop new networking opportunities. So far, I couldn’t be happier with what I’ve learned. The relationships and networks that we are developing will be invaluable in the years to come. I’m very excited for the second year of LEAD and what the future holds for my fellow classmates.

Koryn Koinzan, Neligh

This first year of my LEAD 39 Fellowship has been eye opening and rewarding! I didn’t know what to expect going into it but it has exceeded my expectations. It has challenged me to think outside the box and prepare myself with the tools to step up and take action where needed. The relationships that we have built with our Fellows is strong. LEAD 39 has some amazing folks and I am very blessed to be a part of it! Dr. Hejny does a great job of pushing us into situations we wouldn’t have at home and has a knack of showing us how to figure it out!

Our National Travel Seminar was intense but rewarding. This program has prepared us to lead in many areas and I am already looking to where I can help out! I look forward to our second year of the LEAD Program and where it will take us!

Jason Christensen, Arthur

Thank you! Though the LEAD 38 Final Seminar was cut short, these donors were there for us:

Barnstar Farms  Don and Donna Hutchens  Sheryl Snyder
Boeck Seed Services  Field Solutions  Sunland Seeds
Channel Bio  Andrew Kabes (LEAD 32)  T&T Seed Express
Dean Seeds  LTW Ag Channel Bio

Thank You Banquet Sponsors We extend our thanks to:

- Nebraska Agribusiness Club  - Omaha Agribusiness Club  - LEAD III
for their continued support of the Nebraska LEAD Program by underwriting a portion of the cost of the Annual Recognition Banquet.
March 13, 2020, the following Nebraska LEAD 38 Fellows completed the program:

Rene Blauhorn, Palmer
Noah Blomendahl, Fremont
Cale Buhr, Trumbull
Lori Cox, Grand Island
Michael Dibbern, Cairo
Lindsay Forepaugh, Kimball
Shane Greving, Chapman
Dennis Hoppe, Hastings
Doran Johnson, Denton
Katie Kalff-Jagels, Davenport

Jack Lindstrom, Broken Bow
Troy Mack, Broken Bow
Anthony Marquardt, Holdrege
Boone McAfee, Lincoln
Kyle McCarthy, Chadron
Haley Miles, Ainsworth
Jennifer Penny, Decatur
Paula Peterson, Waverly
Heather Ramsey, Bruning
Jordan Rasmussen, Fremont

Ryan Sandoz, Omaha
Scott Schmalken, Murray
Tony Schrotberger, Grant
Rebecca Schwarz, Bertrand
Sarah Sivits, Elm Creek
Judy Trent, Pleasanton
Veronica Waddell, Indianola
Evan Weborg, Elkhorn
Aaron Weismann, Maywood
Logan Williams, Central City

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We would also like to thank Premier Catering for all they did to prepare for the banquet and their cooperation with the cancellation.
Applicants Wanted to apply for Nebraska LEAD Class 40

Applications are available for Nebraska LEAD Class 40.

The application deadline is June 15, 2020.

Seminars begin Fall 2020.

The 2020 recipient of the Allen G. Blezek Friend of LEAD Award is John McClure, Vice President of Government Affairs and Legal Counsel for NPPD.

Contact Cassondra Dobbs in the LEAD office at leadprogram@unl.edu.