As I write this column (February 25), 350 days have passed since March 12 of last year, the day we canceled LEAD 38’s final seminar, the annual banquet, etc. By the time you read our newsletter, well over 366 days will have passed. During this past year, we have learned so much about ourselves, each other, and the organizations we serve which are very important to us. I am truly looking forward to getting the Nebraska LEAD Program going this fall, after our one-year pause. It will be like starting a whole new year! A chance to make some “New Year’s” resolutions again? Speaking of New Year’s resolutions, a recent study concluded that four out of five people will eventually break their resolutions. Another study found that about one-third do not make it past the first month. Are you keeping your New Year’s resolutions? Can you remember what they were? While this year is still quite new, I am proposing to you that during 2021 it is totally acceptable to...

1. make it a priority during the rest of 2021 (and after) to appreciate the small things in life, to stop and smell the roses, to find joy in the small things,
2. find a new hobby that can help you decompress and “cleanse your mind” from the uncertainty of our current circumstances,
3. take a scheduled day (or days) off just to relax and regain your mental strength, do some fun reading or attend a fun webinar, to “sharpen your saw” so to speak (thank you, Steven Covey),
4. be patient with your family, your co-workers, and yourself as you navigate the rest of the year,
5. choose kindness in every situation you encounter, being quick to listen and slow to speak, and treating others the way you want to be treated.

There will continue to be many challenges during the rest of the year. However, it is my sincere hope that by subscribing to the five points above, then together we will achieve. “You never know how strong you are, until being strong is your only choice.” (Bob Marley)

Be strong, stay strong, and LEAD on!

In closing, I am very blessed to work with so many fine people and I thank you for allowing me the honor and privilege to serve as the director of the Nebraska LEAD Program. Take care, be safe, and stay healthy.
“What a difference a year makes.” We’ve all heard those words numerous times over the years, but this past year brings new meaning to the phrase, for sure.

As I write this column, we are approaching a year of facing a “novel coronavirus”; a year that has impacted some more than others. I think of the health care/emergency workers, teachers and school staff, law enforcement, food processing workers, and the livestock industry among others that have faced enormous challenges and some way, have been able to find the strength to work through these trying times. This year also impacted our LEAD Program in significant ways. While the board of directors made the difficult decision of taking a “pause year”, we have continued to seek ways to provide elite leadership programming. Through the leadership of our curriculum committee, the board has been conducting an in-depth study of all facets of our program. As we exit this “pause year” we anticipate some changes to our program based on our findings. Some of the changes may be minor, some more significant, but be assured we want to make sure our Nebraska LEAD Program remains a first-tier ag leadership program.

As we see brighter days ahead, I hope everyone is able to remain safe and be prosperous in this “new” year.

The Nebraska LEAD Program would like to thank Lori Pankoke, Pat Rasmussen, and Ed Woeppel 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. They will be completing their second 3-year term on June 30. Without the volunteer service of such individuals, LEAD would not be among the elite leadership development programs in which we are currently counted. THANK YOU!

LEAD Set to Resume Seminars - LEAD 40 Applications Available

Ed Woeppel, chairman of the Nebraska Agricultural Leadership Council recently announced, “We are anxiously anticipating the resumption of LEAD programming this coming fall. We have spent our “pause” year reassessing the entire program. We are confident that the Nebraska LEAD Program is positioned to continue to be a leader in agricultural leadership development. We look forward to continuing the experiences for LEAD 39 after a one-year pause as well as to welcome in a new group in LEAD 40.”

Fellowship applications for Nebraska LEAD (Leadership Education/Action Development) Group 40 are now available for men and women involved in production agriculture or agribusiness. “Up to 30 motivated men and women with demonstrated leadership potential will be selected from five geographic districts across our state,” said Terry Hejny, Nebraska LEAD Program director.

Applications are due no later than June 15 and are available via e-mail from the Nebraska LEAD Program. Please contact the Nebraska LEAD Program office at leadprogram@unl.edu. You may also request an application by writing to Nebraska LEAD Program, PO Box 830940, Lincoln, NE 68583-0940 or by calling (402) 472-6810. You can visit www.lead.unl.edu for information about the selection process.

Nebraska LEAD Program Alumni Making Their Mark

Check out page 5 of this newsletter to see the impact our alumni are making on agriculture and beyond!

Alumni, tell us what leadership positions you are in so we can share your success stories. Email us at leadprogram@unl.edu or leave us a voicemail at 402-472-6810.
A LEAD Fellowship? What’s That?

Did you know that it currently costs the Nebraska LEAD Program approximately $11,500 per Fellow to put them through our two-year program - with costs ever-climbing? The individual participant fee total is $2,500 for the two years. Doing the math that leaves $9,000 per Fellow or $270,000 for a typical class of 30 that LEAD covers through various funding sources. (Remember, we run two classes concurrently so it is then $270,000/year that your LEAD Program covers.) One source that we use to bridge the gap is our fully-funded fellowships.

The fellowships of the Nebraska LEAD Program are honors bestowed on select LEAD Fellows that meet the parameters set by the sponsoring entity. A few of the selection parameters could be county of residence, production or non-production employment, and/or it could be limited to a specific industry such as grain marketing or beef production. Names of Fellows that meet the fellowship parameters are forwarded to the sponsor or organization representative and they make the selection. It is important to note that LEAD Fellows who are selected for a fellowship are still responsible for paying their $2,500 total participation fee. Again, the intent of a fellowship is to help LEAD cover the cost gap between the participant fee and the actual cost of the LEAD experience. The honor of a fellowship comes with responsibility as well. Fellowships typically require the selected LEAD Fellow to meet with the sponsoring family or organization representative as well as provide reports on their journey through LEAD.

Currently, the Nebraska LEAD Program has the following fully funded fellowships:
- Gudmundsen LEAD Program Excellence Fund
- Neal and Leone E. Spencer Harlan Endowment Fund
- Clifford and Ruthalee Jorgensen Endowment Fund
- Frank and Shirley Sibert LEAD Program Excellence Fund
- M. Eighmy Foundation LEAD Program Excellence Fund

Our partially funded fellowships are:
- Dr. Allen G. and Kay L. Blezek Endowment Fund for Leadership Development
- Lancaster County Farm Bureau, Inc. Fellowship
- Jerry A. and Naomi L. Warner Fellowship
- Dr. Kathleen J. Wittler, D.V.M LEAD Fellowship

Our newest fellowship established in the fall of 2020 by the Nebraska LEAD Alumni Association in partnership with the NU Foundation, which is not currently fully-funded, is the Dr. Allen Blezek Memorial Fellowship.

If you are interested in establishing a fellowship as a legacy to honor someone important to you, a legacy to your family’s operation, on behalf of your organization/company, or as a means of showing your appreciation and support of your Nebraska LEAD Program, please call Terry at the LEAD office at 402-472-6810. He will be happy to begin that conversation with you.

The LEAD Purpose

The dynamic industry of agriculture plays a profound and over-riding role in every phase of Nebraska life. The LEAD Program recognizes that the development of human resources for agriculture and Nebraska should not be left to chance. The LEAD Program strives to address the needs of community members involved in the business of agriculture by presenting opportunities to broaden one’s knowledge and strengthen leadership and decision-making abilities.

Congratulations to:
Matt (LEAD 33) and Dana Dolch on the birth of their daughter, Carsyn Jane on December 9, 2020.
Mark (LEAD 34) and Haley (LEAD 38) Miles on the birth of their son, Bogue Henry on December 26, 2020.
Brian (LEAD XXVI) and Lindsay Wray on the birth of their son, Bryker Paul on January 19, 2021.

Condolences
Our condolences to the family of Seth Davison (LEAD 35) on the passing of his mother, the family of Mark Suhr (LEAD 33) on the passing of his father; the family of Jean Schlickbernd (LEAD XX) on the passing of her mother; the family of Christine Erquiaga (LEAD 34) on the passing of her mother; the family of Shanna (Waterman) Schulz (LEAD 32) on the passing of her step-father; the family of Terry O’Neel (LEAD XXIII) on the passing of his mother; the family of Ward Reesman (LEAD XXVIII) on the passing of his mother; the family of Becky Kreikemeier (LEAD XXX) on the passing of her father, and the family of Aaron Kavan (LEAD 37) on the passing of his mother.
OUR MISSION: TO PREPARE AND MOTIVATE MEN AND WOMEN IN

A Year In

Shana Gerdes
Admin. Assoc.

Sitting down to write my biannual newsletter article, I find myself feeling listless and adrift. So much has happened in the past year and yet I feel like I’m in suspended animation. Much of my life right now feels heavy and disconnected. While I like the freedom working from home affords me (and our pandemic puppy, Lucy, would be very lonely if I started going in every day for 8 hours), I miss the connection to what was my normal. It’s not just the pandemic that has me off-kilter. I am viscerally weary of our county’s politics acting as a black hole sucking in altruism, good intent, and faith in our democracy and spitting out false conspiracies, division, and violence.

I would hazard to say I am in a mildly depressive state, or maybe suffering anxiety - or both - two sides of the same coin. I know I’m not alone. In talks with family and friends, some of them are in this quiescent state as well. Even reality personality Eve Kilcher of Alaska the Last Frontier is in a quagmire of worry. Recently, Eve tearfully echoed what has been spinning through my mind so often of late: worry for our children in this very conflicted and intolerant country with our homegrown hate groups and the failures of our nation’s leadership on so many fronts. There are colossal environmental challenges we are ignoring. And then there’s COVID’s destruction with the increased joblessness, homelessness, and hunger, children’s educations interrupted, and the virus mutating with some people worrying more about bucking a mask mandate than protecting each other from illness or death. Whatever happened to, “Love thy neighbor?”

Like Eve, in the day-to-day, I try to stay in the moment, getting done what needs to be done - trying to take the future in bite-sized bits. I move forward, trying not to get too mired down in worry, and to remain hopeful. I remind myself of what I’ve told my children since they were little, “Be kind to yourself, be kind to others, and try hard.” Thankfully, I have little Lucy acting as my therapy dog. She’s my constant companion and we walk - even when it’s cold and our road leans more to mud than anything resembling actual gravel. (Lucy often looks like her legs are breaded in gunge, but thankfully, at 15 pounds she’s an easy fit for the laundry room sink.) Inevitably, after our walkabout, I breathe easier if only for a little while.

So, then, here we are a year into the pandemic and it feels like we’ve been through one wall of a hurricane - not sure if we’ve reached the eye, but are definitely still waiting to pass through the other side, hoping it doesn’t continue to strengthen in the meanwhile. With the coronavirus still evolving we have not reached the stage where we can implement a more permanent normal. Not to mention, our country needs so much healing socially, economically, and politically - with a few more “Ily-s” to boot. It is no small wonder then that I look forward to our pause year ending and our Nebraska LEAD Program moving forward with its work cultivating LEADers worth following - leaders who will create paths to a more stable, new and improved - and please, unified - normal.

Thank You

Cassondra Dobbs
Admin. Asst.

Hello and Happy New Year! I hope that everyone’s 2021 is shaping up to be better than 2020. Mine has started out busy, but great. I am taking my last couple of accounting classes this semester and studying for the CPA exam. And I started a new job at the State Auditor’s office in January. I will miss working for the LEAD Program. Not just because I had a beautiful view of East Campus from the office window, but because of the impact LEAD has on its Fellows and the greater community. I am glad I could be a part of such a great program. Thank you, Shana and Terry, for all the work that you do and for letting me be a part of it. And thank you to everyone for your involvement in the Nebraska LEAD Program.

Help Is Out There

These are difficult times. If you or someone you know is struggling with mental health issues - please know there is help. Below are some resources available:

If you need mental-health or substance-use support during the pandemic, please contact:

8AM – 8PM Central Standard Time, 7 Days a Week.

Nebraska Strong provides community-based support and education to help. 800-464-0258

Nebraska Family Helpline: 888-866-8660

Nebraska Rural Response Hotline: 800-464-0258

National Suicide Prevention LifeLine: 800-273-TALK (8255)
Learn how to recognize the warning signs when someone’s at risk—and what you can do to help. If you believe someone may be in danger of suicide:

• Call 911, if danger for self-harm seems imminent.
• Ask them if they are thinking about killing themselves. This will not put the idea into their head or make it more likely that they will attempt suicide.
• Listen without judging and show you care.
• Stay with the person or make sure the person is in a private, secure place with another caring person until you can get further help.
• Remove any objects that could be used in a suicide attempt.

If you want to help and take an active role in recognizing and addressing mental health issues in your friends, family, or community contact Mental Health First Aid at mentalhealthfirstaid.org to learn more.
LEADing the Way

Bruce Bostelman (LEAD XXVII) was re-elected to represent District 23 in the Nebraska State Legislature.
Ken Rahjes (LEAD XXVII) was re-elected to represent District 110 in the Kansas House of Representatives.
Matt Broz (LEAD 33) was re-elected to the Mid-Plains Community College Board of Governors.
Kathy Boeilstoff (LEAD V) was re-elected to the Southeast Community College Board of Governors.
Jim Bendfeldt (LEAD XIII) was re-elected to the Central Platte NRD Board of Directors.
Marvion Reichert, Jr. (LEAD XXX) was re-elected to the Central Platte NRD Board of Directors.
Mick Reynolds (LEAD XXIII) was re-elected to the Central Platte NRD Board of Directors.
Marcel Kramer (LEAD XIX) was re-elected to the Lewis & Clark NRD Board of Directors.
Tim Nollette (LEAD XVI) was elected to the Middle Niobrara NRD Board of Directors.
Jolene Messinger (LEAD 33) was re-elected to the Middle Republican NRD Board of Directors.
Tracy Zink (LEAD 35) was re-elected to the Middle Republican NRD Board of Directors.
David Grimes (LEAD XIX) was re-elected to the Tri-Basin NRD Board of Directors.
Keith Heithoff (LEAD XXIX) was re-elected to the Upper Elkhorn NRD Board of Directors.
Rich Zochol (LEAD VII) was re-elected to the Upper Niobrara NRD Board of Directors.
Kyle Shepherd (LEAD 36) was elected to the Central Nebraska Public Power & Irrigation District - Lincoln Subdivision.
Danny Kluthe (LEAD XXV) was re-elected to the Cumming County Public Power Board of Directors.
Craig Wietjes (LEAD XIX) was re-elected to the Dawson County Public Power Board of Directors.
Aaron Troester (LEAD 37) was elected to the Nebraska Public Power District Board of Directors.
Mark Knobel (LEAD IV) was re-elected to the Norris Public Power District Board of Directors.
Ron Stech (LEAD XXIX) was appointed in March of 2020 and then elected to the Northeast Nebraska Public Power Board of Directors.
Joel Kuehn (LEAD XXVII) was elected to the Southern Public Power Board of Directors.
Bruce Lans (LEAD VII) was re-elected to the Twin Valley Public Power Board of Directors.
Bob Chilcoat (LEAD I) was re-elected to the Educational Service Unit #8 Board of Directors.
Esther Rickert (LEAD 34) was re-elected to the Educational Service Unit #10 Board of Directors.
The above information was obtained from the Nebraska Secretary of State. We do not have access to local and county election results. If you were elected to a local or county office, please send us this information and we will list this in the fall newsletter.
Scott Sorensen (LEAD 37) was recently appointed to the Hall County Board of Commissioners.
Judy Trent (LEAD 38) was recently appointed to the Nebraska Council on Developmental Disabilities.
Gerald Clausen (LEAD I) was appointed to serve as a senior advisor of the Nebraska City/County Management Association, a subsidiary of the International City/County Management Association.
Tim Higgins (LEAD 35) is serving as treasurer and on the board of directors for the AgriSafe Network. AgriSafe was formed in 2003 by rural nurses who believed that together they could improve the health and safety of farmers and ranchers. Today, AgriSafe builds the competency of health and safety professionals to deliver exceptional occupational agricultural health care.

The Nebraska Cattlemen’s Association recently elected William “Bill” Rhea III (LEAD XVIII) to serve as president for 2021. The 2021 board of directors includes: Tyler Weborg (LEAD XXII) – Region 3 member services vice chair, Richard Pierce (LEAD VIII) – taxation committee chair, and Dawn Caldwell (LEAD XXIV) – member services committee chair.

Ann Marie Bosshamer (LEAD XV) is the Nebraska Cattlemen’s recipient of the 2020 Industry Service Award. Ann Marie has dedicated well over 20 years to the Nebraska Beef Council and is currently the executive director.

Nate Blum (LEAD 36) was appointed by the USDA to serve on the Grains, Feeds, Oilseeds, and Planting Seeds Ag Trade Advisory Committee (ATAC). Blum serves as the executive director of the Nebraska Grain Sorghum Board and the Nebraska Grain Sorghum Producers Association.

Nebraska Soybean Board officers for 2021 are: Chairman Eugene Goering (LEAD XXVII), Vice Chairman Doug Saathoff (LEAD XXV), Secretary Clay Govier (LEAD 37), and Treasurer Anne Meis (LEAD 33).

The National Cattlemen’s Beef Association Committee Leadership for 2021 includes Ken Herz (LEAD III), vice-chair for ag & food policy, and Jaclyn Wilson (LEAD XXIV), vice-chair for international trade.

The USDA recently announced that Greg Grevling (LEAD XVIII), Ron Pavelka (LEAD XXVI), and Tony Johanson (LEAD 31) will represent our state on the United Soybean Board.

The USDA Corn Growers Association Board of Directors recently elected officers for 2021. Andy Jobman (LEAD 35) was elected president, David Merrell (LEAD XXIV) was elected secretary, and Michael Dibbern (LEAD 38) was elected treasurer.

The Agriculture Builders of Nebraska (ABN) recently announced the election of the following to membership: Britt Anderson (LEAD XXVII), Bart Beattie (LEAD XXII), Amber Burge (LEAD 37), Gary Kubicek (LEAD I), and Kenny Stauffer (LEAD XXVI).

Ken Herz (LEAD III) was named the 2021 Outstanding LEAD Alum by the Nebraska LEAD Alumni Association. Ken was also the 2020 president of the Nebraska Cattlemen and now serves as past president & nominations chair for 2021.

Shane Grevling (LEAD 38) was re-elected as president of the Nebraska Soybean Association at the annual meeting in January.
Dr. Allen Blezak Memorial Fellowship

As noted on page 3 of this newsletter, we are working to fully fund the Dr. Allen Blezak Memorial Fellowship. Dr. Blezak positively impacted so many lives - what better way to repay that gift than to make a donation to the fellowship established in his memory?

Please consider making a donation to the Dr. Allen Blezak Memorial Fellowship by visiting the NU Foundation’s website: http://nufoundation.org/Blezek

Or mail a check payable to: Nebraska LEAD Program (Blezek Fund in memo line)

Nebraska LEAD Program, PO Box 830930, Lincoln, NE 68583-0940

Applicants Wanted for Nebraska LEAD Class 40

Seminars begin Fall 2021.

The application deadline is

http://nufoundation.org/Blezek

Or mail a check payable to: Nebraska LEAD Program (Blezek Fund in memo line)