Hey did it! Yes, they did! LEAD 39 graduated on March 11! Their 18-month leadership development program turned into 30 months due to the pandemic. I am proud of them! LEAD 39 will now be moving on to serve in leadership roles in agriculture and their communities. They will be continuing the 39-year tradition of applying their LEAD experiences in order to have a positive impact on the lives of others. Like the 38 classes before them, they will make a difference. Congratulations, LEAD 39! LEAD on!

For almost another year the Nebraska LEAD Program has continued to offer an outstanding educational experience for established and emerging leaders in agriculture. We have many to thank for our longevity and success — our founders, our many donors, our previous directors and staff members, our alumni, industry partners, campus coordinators and volunteers, and higher education administrators and their faculty and staff. Our goal and long-term philosophy continues to include that of honesty and integrity in providing the highest quality of innovative programming to our LEAD Fellows, in professionalism in working with others, and in the prudent management of our financial resources. I believe these core values are the bedrock of the organization’s success for the past 40 years.

By the time you read this, LEAD 40 will have completed their first year in the program. So that means . . . 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 speakers, travel seminars, and other parts of our curriculum. A strong, diverse applicant pool allows our selection committee to seat a class that is purposefully chosen to maximize their collective learning experience. The application due date is June 15. Please send nominations, contact information, etc. to our office as soon as possible.

As always, I will do everything within my power to continue the strong tradition that you have come to expect. I thank you for allowing me the honor and privilege to serve as the director of the Nebraska LEAD Program.
A Message From the Chair of the Board

Kelly Brunkhorst

No matter how often one travels, everyone will come across another “first.” My most recent first happened at Eppley Airfield as I was concluding recent business travel: I was finally walking off the plane and out of the terminal just as those early morning fliers were entering the security line. What for me was supposed to be a late evening arrival quickly turned into an early bird landing. I use this story as a reflection point on the past year of the LEAD Program – how with perseverance and patience, we can all work through challenging times that confront us. Congratulations to LEAD 39 as they recently joined over 1,000 alumni of the Nebraska LEAD Program. The perseverance they displayed through a global pandemic and the patience of changing schedules and seminars is to be commended! Agriculture looks forward to their involvement and service in the industry.

Upon reflection, the Nebraska LEAD Program had a successful programming year. Through our “pause and learning” keynote speaker, Rob Robertson, both during the final seminar for LEAD 39, Dean Sherri Jones, keynote speaker during the Spader Leadership Luncheon, and the banquet keynote speaker, Rob Robertson, both talked about identifying the “why” as a leader - why does your group, business, or organization exist? What is its purpose?

Most often you can find the why in an entity’s mission statement. The Nebraska LEAD Program’s mission statement is above on this newsletter’s masthead, “to prepare and motivate men and women in agriculture for more effective leadership.” But maybe this doesn’t clearly define our why. We’re building leadership in ag, but to what purpose? “Why?” We need ag leaders because food security is a cornerstone to societal stability, agriculture employs over 2.1 billion people either directly or indirectly, and in addition it is usually the economic driver of rural communities across the globe. Oh, and did I mention agriculture is responsible for feeding a population of over 7.9 billion people (and let’s not forget millions of animals) world-wide? It seems a given that something so profoundly essential to life needs the best leaders possible – hence, LEAD’s “why.”

LEAD’s Why

Shana Gerdes
Admin. Assoc.

NALC Membership

If you haven’t paid your 2021-22 FY NALC dues, please consider making the $100 donation of which 100% goes toward funding your Nebraska LEAD Program!

Payable to: LEAD or Nebraska LEAD Program
Mail to: LEAD Program, P.O. Box 830940, Lincoln, NE 68583

Always Learning

Irene Malzer
Admin. Asst.

As I reflect on my first six months at the Nebraska LEAD Program, the expression which pops up often is, “Well, I learned something new today!”

Coming from the financial aid office, it was a huge learning curve for me. I am a very habitual person. I like routines, schedules, and predictability. So, it was a big leap of faith when I hit the ‘apply’ button on the UNL job site when this position was posted. Life has been a whirlwind since. Some days, I think I have things figured out. Other days, I scratch my head and wonder what day it is.

Instead of working with undergraduate students who are away from home for the first time ever, I now work with adults who are on the quest for leadership training and skills they can add to their resume. These Fellows have been quite an inspiration to me. I see hard-working, dedicated individuals. They are dedicated to their families, their industry, and to the state of Nebraska.

Instead of working on the fast-paced UNL City Campus with 25 co-workers, I now work on the serene and beautiful East Campus with 2 co-workers. Terry and Shana have been such a joy to work with. They have been beyond patient with me as I learn the ins and outs of LEAD, NALC, and IANR. I cannot thank them enough for taking a chance on me.

Learning, changing, and growing have been a major part of the last six months for me. But, of course, the last two years have changed us all. It’s time for a “new normal” as they like to say. I like that expression, too. It gives me a chance to catch my breath and remember things may be extremely different than they were before, but different doesn’t necessarily have to be a bad thing. It’s all about learning something we didn’t know before.
Congratulations, LEAD 39!
March 11, 2022, the following Nebraska LEAD 39 Fellows received their program completion certificates:

Bekah Bankson, Hordville
John Bronner, Bellevue
Derek Brown, Bellevue
Alex Buschow, Blue Hill
Jason Christensen, Arthur
Craig Davidson, Omaha
Benjamin Grabenstein, Omaha
Travis Harrison, Lincoln
Tiffany Hemenway, Elgin
Zack Jenner, Eustis

Thomas Kelly, Sutherland
Koryn Koinzan, Neligh
John Krohn, Albion
Justin Lorenz, Columbus
Laurel Mastro, Lincoln
Blythe McAfee, Lincoln
Jeff Meduna, Colon
Jesse Mohnik, Sutton
Brett Muhlbach, Lincoln
Monte Murkle, Clatonia

Cale Pallas, Stromsburg
Andy Paul, Grand Island
Ashley Peters, Broken Bow
Kory Phillips, Mullen
Mike Podany, Clarkson
Tony Sibert, Lincoln
Molly Trausch, Holdrege
Mindy Wolf, Utica

Thank You, Banquet Sponsors!
We extend our thanks to the Nebraska Agribusiness Club and LEAD III for their continued support of the Nebraska LEAD Program by underwriting a portion of the cost of the Annual Recognition Banquet.

Thank You, Banquet Table Sponsors!

Bekah Bankson
Crusty’s Feed Store
Farm Credit Services
Kamler Family Farms
Koinzan Ranch
Zack Jenner

LA FARMS - Grabenstein Family
LEAD III
LEAD Alumni Association
Midplains Ag (2)
John & Pat Miller
Nebraska Agribusiness Club

Nebraska Corn Board
Nebraska Soybean Board
Nebraska’s Natural Resources Districts
Pallas Seeds/Meduna Inc.
Union Bank & Trust - Ag Lending

Thank You to Departing NALC Board Member.
The Nebraska LEAD Program would like to thank Kelly Brunkhorst for his dedication to our mission: To Prepare and Motivate Men and Women in Agriculture for More Effective Leadership, and for his years of service on the NALC Board. He will be completing his second 3-year term on June 30. Without the volunteer service of individuals such as Kelly, LEAD would not be among the elite leadership development programs in which we are currently counted.
OUR MISSION: TO PREPARE AND MOTIVATE MEN AND WOMEN IN

2022 National 2.0 Study Travel Seminar with LEAD 39
Washington, Oregon, California, and Arizona
By Cale Pallas, Mike Podany, Tiffany Hemenway, and Derek Brown

On Thursday, January 6, 22 members of LEAD 39 and Dr. Hejny gathered at the airport in Omaha to begin our “National 2.0” Study Travel Seminar to the American West. This seminar began with our arrival in Seattle, down through Washington and Oregon, through California, and finally ended in Arizona. COVID-19 was on the minds of both participants and schedulers, so we all prepared to be flexible and packed a handful of masks as well as our proof of vaccination cards.

We set off on Alaskan Airlines for a four-hour flight to Seattle. In Seattle, we met our guide, Jim Clark. Jim is a local who has lived up and down the west coast and joined us for the entirety of the seminar. We then met our bus driver, Jack Yuan.

After checking into our downtown hotel, we headed out for dinner where we met with Deszeray Dougherty of the Woodinville Whiskey Company. Deszeray led us in a whiskey tasting experience. She explained the differences between bourbon and rye whiskey and the processes for making both. Woodinville Whiskey uses only grain produced from a family farm in Washington. This was a great way to kick off our National 2.0 seminar!

The following morning began with a bus tour of Seattle. We made quick stops at the marina where Deadliest Catch is filmed and Pikes Place Market. We then had a 90-minute drive north to La Conner, where we met with representatives of Trans Ocean Seafood. Here, we learned about clam and oyster production. Producers use floating bags in the tidal pools to help raise the oysters to their nice round shape. We also sampled some oysters and nearly everyone enjoyed them!

After a delicious lunch at the Waterfront Café, we headed back to Seattle for a walking tour of downtown. This tour was slightly different as it included a tour of Seattle’s underground. It was interesting to learn about the challenges Seattle faced earlier in the city’s history and how eventually, the city was raised to help with flooding. Afterwards, we visited the Seattle Space Needle. Many in our group took the opportunity to take in the views from the top before we headed to an Irish pub for dinner.

We departed Seattle on Saturday morning, heading south. Our first stop found us in Puyallup, Washington, at Tim Richter’s rhubarb and produce farm. We thoroughly enjoyed learning about hot house rhubarb and how his farm grows food all year round. We also enjoyed a robust discussion about the relationship between producers and consumers along with regulations to which his farm must adhere. We then continued south for lunch and a stop at the beautiful Multnomah Falls. Bonneville Dam and Fish Hatchery was the next stop for a self-guided tour of the dam. We learned about the importance of the dam for transportation on the Columbia River. Over half of all the wheat produced in the Pacific Northwest is shipped down the Columbia River.

We spent Saturday night in Portland and the next morning started with a walking tour of the city. We learned about Portland’s history, both old and new, and how it contributes to the city’s culture. After a short drive to Willamette Valley Vineyards, we were given a tour and were treated to a few wine samples as we learned about the viticulture in Oregon. We had many questions about the soil types and production practices, and we learned what makes Oregon wine unique. The day concluded with a presentation by Matt Bliss of Roseburg Timber. Roseburg Timber produces many lumber products. Matt explained how the forests are managed, harvesting techniques, and his company’s sustainability plan.

On the morning of January 10, we departed Eugene, Oregon, for a smaller community nestled in the bountiful Rogue Valley in the southwest corner of the state called Central Point. We visited the Rogue Creamery, home of the “2019-2020 World’s Best Blue Cheese.” Rogue Creamery was established in 1933 as a cooperative but became privately owned in 2002. The owners have since expanded their focus on the viticulture industry moving north. Our hosts at the Rogue Creamery shared that their greatest challenge is accessing a consistent and reliable supply of organic milk for their growing cheese market. Due to those struggles, they have become fully integrated, operating their own dairy herd 60 miles away in Grant Pass. They continue to focus on details, from soaking Syrah grape leaves in pear liqueur for six months, to maintaining their decades old mold culture, which created the world’s best blue cheese, “Rouge River Blue.” Of course, we were able to taste test the world’s best cheese along with several others they produce. While we certainly are not cheese experts, there weren’t any complaints from the LEAD Fellows.

After lunch, we had a short drive to White City, where we stopped by Alpacas at Lone Ranch. As we toured the ranch, we visited with owners Richard and Renate Gyuro. We soon learned they had a passion for alpaca ranching. They moved out of the major metropolitan areas to retire and start their ranch. Their business model is simple as the alpacas are used for wool production. The Gyuros focus on color and quality, primarily for yarn and fill production. With Richard’s experience in sales and...
We met up with Ali Meders-Knight, a tribal member and liaison of the Mechoopda Tribe. At the park, Ali oversees the managing and teaching of Traditional Ecological Knowledge (TEK). In fact, she is a Master TEK Practitioner. TEK is an ecological science and technology developed by indigenous people. She had a very different way of evaluating a parcel of land and how to manage it, compared to our typical mono-culture system that we are accustomed to in Nebraska. While most of us thought things needed a quick shot of Roundup, Ali had a use for all the native plants of the region from salt grass used as a seasoning, to soap root being used to stun fish for harvest. Ms. Meders-Knight has been managing the park for several years and it has taken those years to get this ecosystem back into its natural state. The generational knowledge her tribe passed down, developed by living off the land, really isn’t much different than the knowledge of the land passed down generation to generation on our family farms. Verbena Fields demonstrated a unique way of utilizing available resources.

Outside of Chico, we visited Megan Brown on her ranch. Meg has a large social media following as she has some very strong views she is willing to share, and is an engaging “Ag-vocate.” Her family’s main emphasis on their 3500-acre ranch is cow-calf production. She has expanded into other avenues such as swine production, in which she mentors young urban girls to show the pigs at the local county fair. She is using her passion for agriculture to reach out to local youth with no ag background and is having much success with her mentorships. Meg lives in an area where people have very polarized views regarding agriculture. She is not a large-scale producer, but she is listening to her customers, and is delivering the type of product they want. She finishes out most of her market swine and a portion of their market beef for direct-to-consumer sales. Ms. Brown engages with her customers as they want to know/see where their food comes from, and she welcomes them to her ranch. Some of the consumers want to see the animals being butchered, so she has a mobile processor visit the ranch. When a customer purchases an animal, they are welcomed on the ranch to see their animal. Meg has embraced a niche market, which some are unwilling to do, and it is growing every year. Not everyone may agree with her views, but she is willing to speak on what she believes and advocate for agriculture. The lesson we could all learn from Meg is that we need to tell our story instead of letting our story be told by someone else.

In the evening, in Sacramento, we headed out to dinner. Our special guest for the evening was Secretary of the California Department of Food and Agriculture, Karen Barrett-Ross. Secretary Barrett-Ross is no stranger to Nebraska or the Nebraska LEAD Program, as she is a native Nebraskan and a LEAD VI alumna. Secretary Barrett-Ross shared with us both the challenges and opportunities for California agriculture. Just like our state, California is facing labor issues, increases to minimum wage, and a consumer who is farther and farther removed from the farming connection that once existed and fostered understanding. She stated that California grows over 400 different crops which are highly dependent on both manual labor and irrigation water. The water needed for irrigation is dependent on rain and snowpack north of Sacramento. However, most of the demand for water is in the southern two-thirds of the state. Secretary Barrett-Ross’s passion, “is at the intersection of policy and agriculture.” Sometimes it’s the small things that mean the most . . . and staying at the same hotel for two consecutive nights was a much needed blessing. Not having to pack up sure felt good. The next morning, we met with Dennis Albiani, Vice President of California Advocates, a legislative and regulatory advocacy group. Dennis is an alumnus of the California Agricultural Leadership Foundation Program. Dennis stated, “Farm groups are aligned individually, but not as a group. Almost all sectors of agriculture are fighting very similar battles, but very rarely do they align for the betterment of the holistic cause.” California Advocates are assisting lobbying efforts and are working to align groups to be part of the discussion regarding future regulations.
California is a highly regulated agricultural state. With over 400 crops, this means as more and more regulations are imposed, any associated costs are passed down to the consumers. According to Dennis, our industry has to do a better job of educating both the consumer and government as to what we do and why. We need to be the narrators of our stories, not leaving it to someone who is making assumptions about our craft. The burning question from this discussion is how do we all align as a group to tell our story?

Our second speaker for the day was David Guy, President of the Northern California Water Association (NCWA). “The NCWA is committed to advance the economic, social, and environmental sustainability of the Sacramento Valley by enhancing and preserving its water rights, supplies, and water quality for the rich mosaic of farmlands, cities and rural communities, refuges and managed wetlands, and meandering rivers that support fisheries and wildlife.” The NCWA consists of the “water districts, water companies, small towns, rural communities, and landowners that beneficially use both surface and groundwater resources in Sacramento Valley.” Agriculture is important to Sacramento Valley as rice, almonds, pistachios, and pecans are the major crops grown. One-third of the water used for irrigating these crops comes from groundwater and the balance comes from surface water. This area is home to the largest reservoir in the state, Shasta Reservoir. NCWA is working on implementing and complying with the regulations in the 2014 Sustainable Groundwater Management Act. They are currently developing a water plan for 2042.

After lunch, we traveled to the Center for Land-Based Learning to visit with Dr. Sri Sathuratnam. Dr. Sathuratnam is Director of the California Farm Academy. He gave us a summary of their three training programs started 10 years ago. These programs were needed to train the next generation of farmers and to transfer lifelong knowledge gained to these beginning farmers. One of the programs is the Beginning Farmer Training Program, which is a 6-week course designed to find out if someone really wants to become a farmer. Another of their programs is an Apprenticeship Program, a 7-month program involving a lot of the manual labor and sweat equity to see if the participant is still engaged and wanting more. The final program is a Farm Business Incubator Program; a 4-year program where individuals operate a working farm on a micro scale. Most of the students who enroll have no farming background or experience. As we see the generational shift away from the farm or affiliation, we need to be engaged to bring the next group of agriculture professionals to the sector. Attraction from start to finish is high, but the growers who have finished are successful and thriving. Later, we took a drive through downtown Sacramento with a brief stop at the state capitol building. Some of us took selfies with former Governor Schwarzenegger’s life-size photo.

One of the objectives of our travel seminar is to learn about leadership in agriculture. The next four days were filled with great leaders who shared their knowledge with us just as they do with other producers. They are also teaching students and disseminating the story of agriculture to their customers. Each of our speakers shared their wealth of experience with us. It was inspiring to learn of the diversity on an 80-acre organic fruit farm. Blossom Bluff Organic Orchard has over 150 varieties of citrus and stone fruits listed on their organic certificate. Blossom Bluff utilizes all their fruit by drying whatever fails to sell at the farmers market. The drying process adds value and reduces waste.

Adding value for the consumer is the “name of the game” for fruit producers in California. We learned from the California Fresh Fruit Association that their goal is to provide value to their members by supporting the processors and producers in getting their products on shelves. They also work to make sure the government works for the producers and processors. During our visit to Sun-Maid, we learned they assist their growers in moving their product to the consumer.
several important issues. Some of the topics discussed were both the advantages and disadvantages Arizona navigates to continue to be one of the major produce providers in the country. We had the opportunity to get a closer look at the border and discuss immigration. We also were able to see some of the modern advances in the field as well as the manufacturing side.

We started our first day in Arizona at the Yuma Ag Center (YAC) where we met Paul Brierley, Extension Educator with the University of Arizona. Agriculture is a major economic driver in Arizona with a $23.3 billion impact, while supporting over 138,000 jobs. Yuma, Arizona, is one of the hottest places in the United States and only receives 3" of annual precipitation. Farmers here are completely reliant on canal irrigation to water their crops. This arid climate can be a very challenging place to live and work, but it also allows farmers to grow crops year-round. In fact, 90% of the leafy greens grown in the United States between November and March are grown in Yuma County. The hot climate also allows them to be among the leaders in vegetable, citrus, cotton, and watermelon production. Not surprisingly, Arizona is among the most diverse agricultural production states in the nation. Today the average Arizona farmer feeds 154 people versus only 19 back in 1940.

Other than water one of the greatest challenges farmers in Yuma County have had to face is an E. coli outbreak. E. coli is a bacterium that can live on the surface of a plant and when consumed can make people extremely ill and may be lethal. Farmers do everything in their power to prevent outbreaks, including testing fields right before harvest, but the tests take a couple days to administer and at that point the fields could already be harvested and in the consumers’ hands. The last resort is recalling the produce. Recalls are very expensive, especially because it can take years to earn back consumers’ trust.

Next, we met with Tom Davis, General Manager of Yuma County Water Users’ Association. Tom brought us up to speed on Arizona’s water issues. Arizona is now in stage one mandatory water restrictions due to the decreasing water levels at Lake Mead and in the Colorado River coupled with Arizona having junior water rights to that of California. Arizona has been preparing for these cuts to take place since the 80s by dumping hundreds of thousands of acre-feet of water every year back into the ground. Now, as Tom says, “It’s time to find out how deep we have to drill wells and figure out exactly where the water has moved to.” Years ago, the state expected the city of Phoenix to continue expanding and for houses to eventually cover most of the farm ground surrounding the city, but in some places, this has been slower than expected. The fear today is if water becomes short in supply, while the farms have senior water rights, the state will negate them and allot water to the city - leaving farmers with no hope of growing crops. Tom also stated that several big tech companies are in the process of buying farmland hoping to sell the water rights to companies in Phoenix. These moves are being held up in court. Water rights are such a vital resource that land can go for as much as $20,000 per acre vs $5,000 without water. With Nebraska leading the nation in irrigated acres, this information really resonated with our class. The YAC is located a few miles from our nation’s border with Mexico, so the topic of discussion shifted to immigration. We visited the border and were able to observe the current situation. We saw miles of border fence which had recently been completed just before President Trump left office. However, there were small openings where the construction crews weren’t able to complete the work. We observed a small family of migrants attempting to cross the border in broad daylight. The border patrol was able to convince them to turn around. Tom shared with us that the border patrol doesn’t have the authority to prevent them from entering the United States due to federal regulations. Additionally, because the detention centers are full, when the migrants are arrested they are either released back onto the streets, or oftentimes transferred by plane to other locations in the U.S. For many members of our class, this was truly one of the most eye-opening things we learned during the seminar. Visiting the border gave many of us a different perspective on immigration issues in this country.

On Tuesday, January 18, we began our day by visiting the Pinal Feeding Company (PFC) outside of Maricopa, Arizona. This is a fourth-generation, family operated, cattle feeding operation.
Upon our arrival, we noted they exclusively feed Holstein cattle. PFC sources the feeder cattle from all over the country, processing most of them at a local JBS plant. Pinal Feeding Co. prefers to purchase 300 pounds feeders and sells finished cattle at 1,300 pounds. Their average daily gain is a little slower than most feed yards, but they’re able to make up for this with exceptional meat quality. As the feedlot manager shared, “They may grow slower, but they grow better.” Like most places we visited along the way, finding quality labor is a constant challenge. One of the difficult positions to fill is that of the cowboy, so they’ve elected to transition away from this role over the next couple of years. In total, it takes around 135 hardworking folks in the feed yard and an additional 15 in the feed mill to keep this operation running smoothly. On our next stop we were able to see the world’s largest field robot at the Maricopa Ag Center (MAC) Experiment Station. This 30-ton robot glides on giant tracks above crop fields taking photos to develop varieties more suitable for growing in an arid environment. Other areas of emphasis at the MAC are: precision agriculture, autonomous systems, irrigation technology, and water conservation. Our visit to Arizona wouldn’t have been complete if we wouldn’t have been able to make our final stop of the day, which was at the Phoenix Country Club (PCC). We were fortunate to be able to have been able to make our final stop of the day, which was at

LEADing the Way

Al Vybiral (LEAD XXVIII) was re-elected to the board of KVSS - Spirit Catholic Radio for a three year term (2022-2024). The Nebraska Soybean Board recently elected Doug Saathoff (LEAD XXV) as chair, Clay Govier (LEAD 37) as vice chair, and Brent Steinhoff (LEAD XXV) as secretary. The Nebraska Cattlemen’s Association recently named U.S. Senator Deb Fischer (LEAD VIII) as recipient of its 2021 Industry Service Award. The Nebraska Chapter of the American Society of Farm Managers and Rural Appraisers honored Nebraska LEAD Program Director Dr. Terry Hejny (LEAD XX) as the 2022 recipient of its Distinguished Service Award. The Nebraska Corn Board honored Jon Holzfaster (LEAD XIII) as the first recipient of its Vision Award for 2022. Ken Anderson (LEAD I) was named the 2022 Outstanding LEAD Alum by the Nebraska LEAD Alumni Association.
Congratulations and Condolences
The Nebraska LEAD Program congratulates: Brett (LEAD 39) and Maria Muhlbach on the birth of their son, Beckett Thomas on February 14, 2022; Miles (LEAD 37) and Kaitlyn Buskirk on the birth of their daughter, Madisyn Harper on March 20, 2022, and Alex (LEAD 39) and Sara Buschow on the birth of their daughter, Adaley Grace on April 1, 2022. We also congratulate Alex Buschow (LEAD 39) and Sara Rybacki who were married on March 6, 2022.

We would like to express our condolences to: the family of Anita Keys (LEAD XVII) on the passing of her mother; the family of Alan Emshoff (LEAD V) on the passing of his mother; the family of Kimberly Stuhr (LEAD 37) on the passing of her father; the family of Craig Grams (LEAD XXVI) on the passing of his mother; the family of Darrell Kahler (LEAD 32) on the passing of his father; the family of Tracy Zink (LEAD 35) on the passing of her father; and the family of Jeff Henn (LEAD 31) on the passing of his father.

The Nebraska LEAD Program mourns the loss of Jerry Meyer (LEAD IX) and we wish to express our condolences to his family.

Our Bold Beginnings
“The Nebraska LEAD Program has broadened my perspectives outside of my community and has strengthened my appreciation for our state and its resources. Over the past year, each seminar increased in value as the topics discussed continued to build off of the previous ones. This program provides so many meaningful opportunities both in experiences and personal connections.” — Stephanie Schuler, Lincoln

“Coming into the LEAD Program, I didn’t really know what to expect for content and learning. After nearing completion of the first year I can say it is one of the best leadership experiences I have had. The program challenges me with different topics and ideas I may not give any thought to in my day to day life. I value the networking relationships the LEAD Program grows between Fellows and industry professionals. This program requires a personal commitment which I have not experienced with other programs, but I encourage anyone who is considering LEAD to embrace that commitment and apply. As a final thought, decisions are molded and made by those who participate in their communities, organizations, and clubs. The LEAD Program will help kick-start your participation in these groups and/or fine tune your skills to become the leader you want to be.” — Dylan Haas, St. Edward

“In the past few years of continual historic events, the past year of Nebraska LEAD 40 has provided a fantastic chance to meet face to face with other Fellows, alumni, and speakers. The ability to gain a deeper understanding of the industries that are tied to agriculture throughout the state of Nebraska has been invaluable. As we continue to meet with speakers and individuals from diverse backgrounds, the ability to tie American agriculture and how it impacts them daily is crucial as we continue to tell the story of agriculture’s commitment to serve. I think we have all found this year, that the real connections we have built through Nebraska LEAD establish common ground and trust, which is crucial as we navigate these uncertain and volatile times. I look forward to next year’s opportunities to continue to learn from others as I work to be a more impactful advocate for agriculture.” — Kara Geweke, Omaha

Stay Informed
If you have moved, or changed email or phone numbers, please update the LEAD Program office with your current contact information. This helps us to keep you informed via the bi-annual newsletter and very occasionally via email. Examples of emails sent from our office might be: a link to the NSTS travel log or a reminder/notice of an alumni event.
Dr. Allen Blezek Memorial Fellowship

We are still working to fully fund the Dr. Allen Blezek Memorial Fellowship. Dr. Blezek 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 Blezek Memorial Fellowship by visiting the NU Foundation’s website: https://nufoundation.org/Blezek

The Allen G. Blezek 2022 Friend of LEAD Award

The 2022 recipient of the Allen G. Blezek Friend of LEAD Award is Roger Hanke of Palmer, Nebraska.

Roger Hanke was instrumental in the creation of our LEAD Program in 1981. Additionally, the high regard with which Nebraskans across the state held Mr. Hanke helped to give LEAD legitimacy and credible standing as an up-and-coming leadership development program.

Applicants Wanted for Nebraska LEAD Class 41


The application deadline is http://leadprogram.unl.edu or call 402-472-6810.

Contact the LEAD office via email at leadprogram@unl.edu or call 402-472-6810.

Applicants Wanted for Nebraska LEAD Class 41