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LINCOLN, NE (April 6, 2009) --Awards were presented to 16 FFA members for their speaking skills and knowledge of cooperatives during the 81st Annual Nebraska FFA Convention on April 3, 2009.

Each contestant in the Cooperative Speaking Competition was judged on a six- to eight-minute prepared speech on a topic dealing with cooperatives and their benefits to the local, state and national economies. Participants were selected for the competition at district contests throughout the state over the past several months.

The competition is sponsored by the Nebraska Cooperative Council in an effort to help develop leadership skills and increase understanding of the cooperative system. The Council is a statewide, non-profit, non-partisan trade association representing approximately 90% of the agricultural cooperatives throughout Nebraska.

Jody Wendt from the Leigh-Clarkson FFA Chapter took top honors in the 2009 competition and received a trophy, first place medal, and check for \$100 from the Nebraska Cooperative Council. Second place went to Jordyn Lechtenberg of the Ainsworth FFA Chapter along with a medal and check for \$50. Third place went to Cory Schlichtemeier of the Conestoga FFA Chapter who received a medal and check for \$25.

Receiving medals in the competition and the FFA chapters they represent were (in alphabetical order):

Gold - Rachael Arkfeld, Lourdes Central; Andrew Brittenham, Superior; Lauren Ibach,
SEM

Silver - Brooke Ellerman, Logan View; Jana Nollette, Cody-Kilgore; Brandi Roehrs,
Hampton; Jenna Schutt, Mead; Katie Thraikill, Seward

Bronze - James Burkland, Central; Kyle Dvorak, Stuart; Amanda Grim, Verdigre;
Johanna Nutt, Medicine Valley; Sara Wilmes, Creighton