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LINCOLN, NE (April 12, 2010) --Awards were presented to 23 FFA members for their speaking skills and knowledge of cooperatives during the 82nd Annual Nebraska FFA Convention on April 9, 2010.

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.

Lauren Ibach from the Sumner-Eddyville-Miller FFA Chapter took top honors in the 2010 competition and received a trophy, first place medal, and check for \$100 from the Nebraska Cooperative Council. Second place went to Alix Mashino of the West Boyd FFA Chapter along with a medal and check for \$50. Third place went to Andrew Brittenham of the Superior 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 - Carly Hegemann, Howells-Clarkson; Johanna Nutt, Medicine Valley; Kelsey Wetovick, Fullerton; Kelsie Wiese, Leigh; and Melissa Woeppel, Norris

Silver - Lea Kayton, Seward; Amy Krepel, Crofton; Chelsey Krug, Dundy County-Stratton; Doug Larsen, Stuart; Jana Nollette, Cody-Kilgore; Jenna Schutt, Mead; Marivel Paredes, Pender; and Katie Umland, Fairbury

Bronze - Andrew Ambriz, West Point; Mariah Brandt, Tri County; Caroline Cook, Verdigre; Annalisa Glenn, Greeley-Wolbach; Kayla Golka, Hemingford; Jess Smith, Waverly; and Wade Walters, Shickley