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LINCOLN, NE (April 13, 2011) --Awards were presented to 23 FFA members for their speaking skills and knowledge of cooperatives during the 83rd annual Nebraska FFA Convention on April 8, 2011.

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. 2011 marks the 60th consecutive year that the Council has supported the Nebraska FFA Association.

Brandy Reichmuth from the Humphrey FFA Chapter took top honors in the 2011 competition and received a trophy, first place medal, and check for \$100 from the Nebraska Cooperative Council. Second place went to Amber Burenheide of the Howells-Clarkson 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 - Charity Burkey, Scottsbluff; Brooke Cuba, Twin River; MaKenzie Kalkowski, Wisner-Pilger; Alix Mashino, West Boyd; and Turner Moore, Syracuse

Silver - Jessica Bartak, Ainsworth; Jayde Bensen, Pender; AnnaLisa Glenn, Greeley-Wolbach; Haley Gunnink, Cody-Kilgore; Natasha Hongsermeier, Aurora; Faith Huneke, Wilber-Clatonia; Lexy Nuesch, Pierce; and Melissa Woeppel, Norris

Bronze - Marissa Christiancy, Franklin; Caroline Cooke, Verdigre; Chelsea Nealon, Elba; Jourdan Matthies, Gothenburg; Devynn Patocka, Mead; Megan Portiner, Gothenburg; and McKehna Thiem, Crete