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LINCOLN, NE (April 13, 2016) --Awards were presented to 23 FFA members for their speaking skills and knowledge of cooperatives during the 88th annual Nebraska FFA Convention on April 7-8, 2016.

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 96% of the agricultural cooperatives throughout Nebraska. 2016 marks the 65th consecutive year that the Council has supported the Nebraska FFA Association.

Justin Evert from the Howells-Dodge FFA Chapter took top honors in the 2016 competition and received a trophy, first place medal, and check for \$100 from the Nebraska Cooperative Council. Second place went to Jada Jensen of the Hyannis Chapter along with a medal and check for \$50. Third place went to Lauren Jacobsen of the Wisner-Pilger FFA Chapter who received a medal and check for \$25.

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

Gold - Mekenzie Beattie, SEM; Michael Borgelt, Wisner-Pilger; Hailey Coufal, Howells-Dodge; Jaclyn Frey, Boone Central; Abby Kleager, Aurora

Silver - Jordyn Anderson, Plainview; Caetlen Gyhra, Pawnee City; Courtney Kamler, Shickley; Ashley Kramer, Stuart; Taylor Nielsen, Waverly; Kayla Safarik, Elba; Elizabeth Selting, Elgin; Kenley Schneider, Cody-Kilgore

Bronze - Tiandrah Barnes, Cody-Kilgore; Heidi Borg, Allen; Parker Ehrke, Southern Valley; Brady Harrison, Gothenburg; Chase Jacobson, Holdrege; Naomi Snider, McCool Junction Molly Suhr, Seward