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LINCOLN, NE (April 24, 2017) --Awards were presented to 23 FFA members for their speaking skills and knowledge of cooperatives during the 89th annual Nebraska FFA Convention on April 6-7, 2017.

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. 2017 marks the 66th consecutive year that the Council has supported the Nebraska FFA Association.

Jace Stagemeyer from the O'Neill FFA Chapter took top honors in the 2017 competition and received a trophy, first place medal, and check for \$100 from the Nebraska Cooperative Council. Second place went to Hailey Coufal of the Howells-Dodge Chapter along with a medal and check for \$50. Third place went to Jaclyn Frey of the Boone Central 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 - Abigail Kleager, Aurora (4th); Megan Bahns, Leigh/Clarkson; Alexis Hrbek, Verdigre; Grady Johnson, Holdrege; and Elizabeth Selting, Elgin

Silver - Jordyn Anderson, Plainview; Jacob Borgelt, Wisner-Pilger; Thomas Bosmeniel, Seward; Kara Krejdl, Southern Valley; Anna Ready, Logan View; Sarah Pelton, BerMis; Alex Pistulka, Wilcox-Hildreth; and Parker Smith, SEM

Bronze - Sarah Adam, Ravenna; Kenzie Barnes, Cody-Kilgore; Morgan Edmund, Sioux County; Sloane Holtmeier, Tri County; Cari Howell, Lewiston; Cheyenne McVay, Gothenburg; and Sydney Rath, Hyannis