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LINCOLN, NE (April 15, 2019) --Awards were presented to 24 FFA members for their speaking skills and knowledge of cooperatives during the 91st annual Nebraska FFA Convention on April 4-5, 2019.

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 Education Foundation 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. 2019 marks the 68th consecutive year that the Council or the Education Foundation has supported the Nebraska FFA Association.

Jocelyn Hamilton from the West Holt FFA Chapter took top honors in the 2019 competition and received a trophy, first place medal, and check for \$250 from the NCC Education Foundation. Second place went to Jady Burenheide of the Howells-Dodge Chapter along with a medal and check for \$125. Third place went to Elizabeth Hodges of the Johnson-Brock FFA Chapter who received a medal and check for \$75.

Also receiving medals in the competition and the FFA chapters they represent were (in alphabetical order after 4th place):

Gold - Kenzie Barnes, Cody Kilgore (4th); Calli Bauer, Arcadia; Kara Krejl, Southern Valley; Abby Scholz, BerMis; Lauren Waskowiak, Gothenburg

Silver - Sarah Adams, Ravenna; Kara Barnhart, Garden County; Kelcie Bartlett, Pender; Lana Hebda, Twin River; Caleb Hendrickson, Shickley; Natalie Reeves, Leigh-Clarkson; Ashley Roth, Milford; Madison Stracke, Stuart

Bronze - Jason Brockman, Sandy Creek; Rebecca Dozler, Boone Central; Skylar Edmonds, Sioux County; Abby Frank, Verdigre; Alexis Gerritse, Tri County; Hilary Liermann, Wisner-Pilger; Levi Robinette, Verdigre

Rocky Weber, NCCEF President, indicated that "The Council is proud to provide support for these students as they develop their leadership and communication skills while at the same time learning about the value cooperatives bring to Nebraskans all across the state."