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Sent: Tuesday, December 19, 2023 3:07 PM
To: Deb Mazour
Subject: NCC Cooperation in Nebraska - Dec 2023 issue

Nebraska Cooperative Council's Newsletter



Cooperation in Nebraska

December 19, 2023

ANNUAL MEETING & HALL OF FAME

The 78th Annual Meeting of the Nebraska Cooperative Council was held in Kearney on November 15th, 2023 at the Younes North Conference Center. There were 236 members and guests in attendance.

Council Board Chair David Briggs of Alliance welcomed special guests, members, and sponsors. David presented what will be his final Chairman's report, then Council President Rocky Weber provided a financial report and the President's report. Rocky covered priority state and federal policy issues for 2023-24 and showed highlights of the Council's updated Cooperative Economic Impact Report.

Following this report, Election Committee Chairman Dean Thernes announced that Luke Carlson, Board Chair of Central Valley Ag in York, was elected to a 4-year producer position term on the NCC Board of Directors. Jeff Krejdl, CEO of Ag Valley Cooperative in Edison was elected to a 4-year manager position term with the board. The Council is also pleased to announce that Dean Thernes from Battle Creek has been elected Board Chair and Jeremy Wilhelm from Lincoln has been elected Vice Chair. Congratulations to the new directors and officers.

A copy of the minutes is linked [here](#). Please notify the Council at debm@nebr.coop by December 29th if there are any objections or errors. If none are received, the minutes shall be deemed accepted as distributed.

The Council and its membership then honored outgoing Board Chairman David Briggs and outgoing Director Galen Kuska. David served on the NCC Board of Directors for 16 years, including 11 years as Board Chairman. He also served 16 years on the Legislative Advisory Committee, and 22 years on the Political Action Committee (PAC), and 11 years on the Excellence in Cooperative Education Committee (ECEC). Galen served on the NCC Board for 4 years, and he also served 3 years on the PAC, 2 years on the ECEC, and 5 years on the Hall of Fame Committee. The Nebraska Cooperative Council and its members greatly appreciate all of the hard work and years of service Galen and David dedicated toward the advancement of Nebraska's cooperative system.

The Nebraska Cooperative Council and its members were delighted to induct 2 extremely deserving cooperators in the Nebraska Cooperative Council Hall of Fame: Jerrell Dolesh and Ron Velder. Videos laying out their impressive careers can be found [here](#) for Jerrell and [here](#) for Ron. Congratulations on your well-earned induction into the NCC Hall of Fame.

The keynote for the evening was delivered by Nebraska Governor Jim Pillen. Governor Pillen discussed how this is an exciting time for Nebraska agriculture with opportunities that the industry can take advantage of. Biofuels, trade opportunities, and sustainable ag incentives were among the issues highlighted by the governor. Governor Pillen, himself a producer, continues to demonstrate a commitment to supporting agriculture in Nebraska.

After Governor Pillen's remarks, the meeting was adjourned and the annual membership reception began. Members and supporters were able to enjoy fellowship, food, and drinks.

Thank you to these members and supporting organizations for co-sponsoring this successful NCC Annual Meeting:

PLATINUM:

AGP
CHS, Inc
CoBank
EBM Construction, Inc.
Marsh McLennan Agency
ProValue Insurance

GOLD:

Associated Benefits Corporation

SILVER:

Kelley Plucker, LLC
McPherson Concrete Storage Systems, Inc
Triangle Insurance

BRONZE:

Four Points Federal Credit Union
GROWMARK, Inc
Coop 401k by Milliman
Nebraska Corn Board

BNSF Railway
Crosby Guenzel LLP
Gardiner+Company
Land O'Lakes, Inc
United Benefits Group

Nebraska Rural Radio Association
Stifel - Olson Financial Group
StoneX Financial Inc.
The Cooperative Finance Association





Pictured above:

ROW 1: Rocky (at podium) recognizes two outgoing NCC Board members: Chair David Briggs (center), CEO of Westco-Alliance, and Director Galen Kuska (right), Farmers Cooperative-Dorchester.

ROW 2: Two new board members were elected by the membership - Jeff Krejdl (left), CEO of Ag Valley Co-op in Edison, and Luke Carlson (right), Bd Chair of CVA in York. Both will serve 4-yr terms.

ROW 3: Jerrell Dolesh (left) and Ron Velder (right) were inducted into the Nebraska Cooperative Council Hall of Fame. They are pictured with their families.

ROW 4: Following adjournment of the Annual Meeting, everyone enjoyed time for fellowship, food and drinks.

COMPLETED EDUCATION PROGRAMS

Director/Manager Workshop

The morning after the Annual Meeting, the Council hosted experts for the 2023 Director/Manager Workshop, entitled “Make Ready: Confronting Global and Local Risks.” There were 118 CEOs, staff, and board members in attendance. NCC would like to thank Farm Credit

Services of America for hosting the lunch and breaks for this workshop.

Mark Purdy - Chief Operations Officer for Aimpoint Research, retired Colonel in the U.S. Army, and a fellow producer - opened DMW with a presentation entitled "American Food Power." Mark laid out how the United States' food production creates an important national security advantage, but there are vulnerabilities that must be addressed to ensure that advantage is maintained.

Dave Juday, founder of the Juday Group and Executive Advisor for Economics and Trade for Aimpoint Research, then presented on the history, present, and future of U.S./China trade relations. The overview of how we got to this point and where we might be headed offered insights into potential impacts on Nebraska producers.

Finally Ken Zuckerg, Lead Analyst and Senior Economist in CoBank's Knowledge Exchange, closed with "Managing Risk During Risky Times." Ken discussed economic trends and the impacts being seen from international conflicts.

Groundwork

Directly following Director/Manager Workshop, the Council was excited to launch GROUNDWORK - Cultivating the Ag Leaders of Tomorrow. The first meeting for the inaugural cohort began with Mark Purdy presenting "Farmer of the Future 2.0." Aimpoint's Farmer of the Future research is groundbreaking and offers key insights into the characteristics and skills farmers will need in the decades to come.

Following his presentation, the cohort got the opportunity to network over dinner and drinks. They also learned about Nebraska's Cooperative System from NCC President Rocky Weber.

The next morning, Ty Kreitman, Assistant Economist at the Omaha Branch of the Kansas City Federal Reserve, discussed their work and the current state of Nebraska's agricultural economy with the group. The program then closed with a panel of producers with a wealth of experience as leaders in cooperatives. Greg Sabata - retired Director for Frontier, Neil Stedman - Board Chairman for Frontier, and Jerrad Stroh - Board Secretary for CPI and CHS Board Member fielded questions and shared stories about cooperative leadership.

In the coming months, participants will come to Lincoln to meet state senators and learn about state policymaking and advocacy, join virtual presentations with national thought leaders, and venture to Washington D.C. to meet Nebraska's federal delegation and understand federal policymaking and advocacy.

The inaugural GROUNDWORK cohort is filled with talented producers and future leaders, and the Council looks forward to a great year of opportunities to develop advocacy skills and learn from national experts.



Thank you to the local cooperatives supporting GROUNDWORK Cohort 1. Pictured left-right and the co-ops sponsoring each are:

- Brett Behrends - Farmers Cooperative, Dorchester
- Garret Otter - Ag Valley
- Devan Oligmueller - Westco
- Kelsey and Zach Herz - CPI
- Tucker Hartley - Ag Valley
- Andrew Neujahr - Frontier
- Tim Bartak - Country Partners
- Kollby Van Newkirk - Westco
- Dylan Rowe - Country Partners
- Not pictured: Cortney Brandes - Aurora Cooperative
- Unable to attend: Donnia Behrends - Farmers Cooperative, Dorchester

Leadership Luncheon

On December 5th and 12th, the Council hosted a virtual presentation from Dr. Bobby Martens, Iowa Institute for Cooperatives Endowed Professor of Economics and Associate Professor of Economics in the Iowa State University Department of Economics. Dr. Martens, who has over 25 years of logistics and supply chain management experience, presented on Supply Chain Management in Agriculture and on Logistics and Transportation in Agriculture. There were 90 registered participants that were able to learn about these important issues from

Dr. Martens.

Co-op 101s

Adam Feser from NCC presented Co-op 101 to 83 total college students at the University of Nebraska-Kearney, Central Community College-Hastings, and the Nebraska College of Technical Agriculture in Curtis. Thank you to Chris Wagner from Country Partners, Gary Brandt from CPI, and Jeff Krejdl from Ag Valley for joining these presentations and offering your expertise to the students. The Council is scheduled to do several more presentations at colleges during the spring semester.

Intern Retreat

The Council hosted the 5th Cooperative Intern Retreat on June 14th, 2023 in Kearney. There were nearly 100 cooperative interns and staff in attendance. Dr. Jody Herchenbach from the University of Nebraska-Kearney and Rocky Weber opened the program by discussing Nebraska's agricultural cooperative system.

The interns then were able to break into small groups for discussion with cooperative CEOs. Thank you to Carl Dickinson of CVA, Gary Brandt of CPI, David Briggs of Westco, and Jeremy Wilhelm from Frontier for joining these discussions.

Finally Rocky Weber moderated a producer panel to discuss cooperative leadership and service to producers. Thank you to Jerrad Stroh from CPI, Chris Beins from Aurora Co-op, and Ryan Sukraw from Country Partners for participating in this panel.

UPCOMING EDUCATION PROGRAMS

Director Certification Program and Graduate Director Seminar

Director Certification Program Phases 1 and 2 and the Graduate Director Seminar will take place at the Holiday Inn in Kearney on January 3rd and 4th. Phases 1 and 2 will help directors understand co-op principles & practices, the board's role and responsibilities, legal foundations, director's legal obligations, planning, control and board policies. GDS will offer presentations on Analyzing Cooperative Finances and Cooperative Resilience, a presentation that will include recent research on stress testing cooperatives.

Facilitators for DCP include Bill Kutilek - Crosby Guenzel, Dr. Keri Jacobs - Associate Professor of Ag & Applied Economics at the University of Missouri, Brook Stromer - Vice President with CoBank's Regional Agribusiness Banking Group, Rocky Weber - NCC President and General Counsel, and Adam Feser - Director of Cooperative Advancement at NCC.

Facilitators for GDS include Dr. Keri Jacobs, Brook Stromer, and Dr. Brian Briggeman -

Professor and Director of the Arthur Capper Cooperative Center in the Department of Agricultural Economics at Kansas State University.

Participants in DCP and GDS will be able to network and share fellowship at the evening reception and dinner, sponsored by CoBank. The evening will also feature a keynote address entitled “Leaders Provide More Than Just Pep-Talks” by Bill Busch, college football coach for 30+ years.

If you have not yet registered, you can do so here ([DCP form](#), [GDS form](#)). The registration deadline is December 20th.

Board Leadership Seminar

The 2024 Board Leadership Seminar will take place on February 29th at the Omaha-Hilton from 10am-3pm. Rocky Weber and Bill Kutilek will discuss important board leadership issues and answer questions members bring. The open forum discussion format of this program allows for participants to learn about current issues and gain knowledge about a broad array of topics. The pre-registration deadline is February 15th, 2024. ([BLS form](#))

COOPERATIVE MONTH

October was Co-op Month. The Council raised awareness about the importance of cooperatives to our state under the theme “Owning Our Identity.” Governor Pillen signed a proclamation for Cooperative Month which you can see [here](#).

The Council also worked with KOLN/KGIN to air a series of interviews for Cooperative Month. The Council’s NCC in the News page ([LINK](#)) has links to the interviews. Thank you to Galen Kuska from Farmers Cooperative, Evan and Cortney Brandes from Aurora Cooperative, and Greg and Neil Sabata from Frontier Co-op for doing these interviews to highlight Nebraska’s cooperative system.

NCC EDUCATION FOUNDATION SCHOLARSHIPS

The NCCEF Scholarship Program began in 1993, and since that time 240 scholarships totaling \$333,700 have been awarded. Applications are now being accepted for the 2024/25 academic year with an application deadline of April 15, 2024. Promotional materials and application forms can be found [here](#).



CALENDAR OF UPCOMING EVENTS

- January 4-5, 2024 - Director Certification Program Phases 1 and 2 - Kearney, Holiday Inn
- January 4-5, 2024 - Graduate Director Seminar - Kearney, Holiday Inn
- February 29, 2024 - Board Leadership Seminar - Omaha, Hilton

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