A Closer Look at the

ARDC TODAY

A publication of the University of Nebraska Agricultural Research and Development Center

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This issue features **Nebraska Forest Service Fire Shop.** Feature articles include:

Featured in this issue....

Nebraska Forest Service Fire Shop

Above **- The Mead Volunteer Fire and Rescue Department uses a heavy expanded mobility tactical truck (HEMTT) acquired through the Nebraska Forest Service Fire Shop to cross a flooded road.**

Photo by Mead Volunteer Fire and Rescue Department

Moving Forward...New Research and Extension Opportunities

The Agricultural Research and Development Center (ARDC) has been conducting research for over 50 years, research that impacts Nebraskans. And Nebraska Extension is tasked with providing relevant, research-based educational opportunities and information. It's a long-standing partnership between research and Extension - transforming research into results.

In 2014, a resource optimization task force was formed to evaluate how to best utilize the physical and administrative resources at University of Nebraska-Lincoln's Institute of Agriculture and Natural Resources (IANR) facilities located across the state. The team gathered input from both internal and external stakeholders and considered how to most effectively integrate research, Extension and teaching towards the IANR land grant mission.

As a result, the Eastern Nebraska Research and Extension Center (ENREC) is being developed. ENREC is headquartered at the ARDC and includes ARDC research programs, Southeast Research and Extension District (ARDC), Northeast Research and Extension District (Concord), South Central Ag Lab (Clay Center) and a newly developed Metro Extension District (Omaha). Extension in Saunders County continues at the ARDC. This new model specifically addresses the needs of eastern Nebraska in terms of research and Extension efforts by new collaborations and leveraging strengths of existing resources and closer ties to IANR departments and schools.

With the launching of ENREC, there are many exciting developments which will be highlighted in the next publication. The next newsletter will undergo a few changes, but will still keep you up to date on research and provide more information on Extension programming opportunities.

Nebraska Forest Service FIRE SHOP

Providing Quality Equipment and Significant Savings to Fire Districts

The next time you see your local rural fire department out on a call, take note of the fire truck they are using. It just might have had "a previous life". Perhaps that same truck resupplied combat vehicles and weapon systems. Or it might have even transported guided missiles. Maybe it was used stateside for military training. Or it could be that it was utilized oversees for a military operation. Such is the intriguing past of Federal Excess Personal Property Program vehicles utilized by many fire districts across Nebraska.

More than 260 rural fire districts in Nebraska are using reconditioned federal vehicles obtained through the Federal Excess Personal Property/ Firefighter Property (FEPP/ FFP) program. The program is coordinated by the Nebraska Forest Service Fire Shop at the Agricultural Research and Development Center.

Typically, fire districts acquire vehicles for *5% or less* of the cost of new vehicles.

Replacement value for FEPP equipment placed in Nebraska is *$68 Million.*

The program, operated in cooperation with the U.S. Forest Service, currently provides more than 700 vehicles—with a replacement value of a whopping $68 million— to Nebraska fire districts. The vehicles are made available to rural fire districts for only the cost of shipping and reconditioning. Typically, fire districts receive vehicles for 5% or less of the cost of new vehicles!

The transformation of a surplus military vehicle into a suitable vehicle for local fire districts involves several important and necessary steps. When certain types of vehicles are no longer needed by the federal government, they become available at military and federal installations across the country. Through the Federal Excess Personal Property Program (FEPP), in cooperation with the United States Forest Service, the Nebraska Forest Service (NFS) is able to acquire some of these vehicles. The vehicles are then reconditioned and loaned to cooperating rural fire districts.

While in use by rural fire districts, the equipment remains federal property. The property must be returned to NFS when no longer used by the volunteer fire department. It is then reassigned or sold, with the proceeds returned to the federal treasury.

Photos by Lew Sieber, NFS Fire Shop

From Fire Shop to Fire District

The Nebraska Forest Service (NFS) is responsible for screening, retrieving, reconditioning, inventorying and assigning federal excess personal property. The process begins when vehicles are screened through the Government Services Administration website and brought to the Nebraska Forest Service Fire Shop at the ARDC. Upon arrival at the fire shop, mechanics inspect each vehicle to determine what repairs and upgrades are necessary.

Repairs are made to bring the vehicle up to current safety standards. Additional safety devices, such as back-up alarms, light

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Global Engagement...

Why do we do it?

We host visitors from many different countries at the ARDC. The research center is a great place to highlight University of Nebraska research and see it up close. The center also provides a venue for learning about agriculture in Nebraska and production ag in general.

Most often, groups that visit the center are part of a larger University of Nebraska Institute of Agriculture and Natural Resources (IANR) visit to the United States. Sometimes the question is asked, "So why does IANR want to develop these global relationships?"

The answer is actually fairly simple....because of the importance of agriculture to our state and for the sake of global food supply and security. In a recent IANR All Hands presentation, IANR Interim Harlan Vice Chancellor Ron Yoder noted that U.S. agriculture exports are currently estimated at $124.5 billion and will account for nearly 30% of this year's total farm and ranch gross cash sales of $415.7 billion. Nebraska ranks 5th nationally in agricultural exports with $7 billion of ag products exported worldwide.

Nebraska has a vested interest in doing what's best for agriculture. And IANR plays an important role in helping build and bridge partnerships of understanding and education. Not only does it help our economy, but those partnerships are an important step for improved water and food security.

A high-level delegation from the Argentine government and senior officials interested in learning about the University of Nebraska's water and ag research visited the ARDC this summer. They learned about carbon sequestration, remote sensing generated data related to climate studies, variable rate irrigation center pivots, and satellite and UAV remote sensing and modeling. The federal government of Argentina seeks to further develop agricultural production and productivity and the country's water management and irrigation infrastructure, as well as efforts to improve rural sanitation and poverty reduction. Their visit to Nebraska followed discussions Chancellor Ronnie Green had in Argentina with various agencies in May.

Delegates from the Yangling Agricultural Demonstration Zone Governing Body in Shaanxi China, Northwest Agriculture and Forestry University (NWAFU) got a close-up look at Nebraska agriculture at the ARDC. NWAFU is working with the Nebraska Department of Economical Development, the University of Nebraska and Nebraska-based agricultural businesses, as they seek to develop a demonstration farm in Yangling.

The Mead Volunteer Fire and Rescue Department utilizes 2 HEMTTs acquired through the NFS Fire Shop.

Photo by Mead Volunteer Fire and Rescue Department

Saving Lives, Property, and Tax Dollars

Mead Fire Department Works with NFS Fire Shop to Acquire HEMTTs

In 2012, Mead Volunteer Fire and Rescue Department found themselves in a tight spot. Equipment needed updated and purchasing a brand new truck was not feasible. The MVFD executive board met with the Nebraska Rural Fire District Board on how to best utilize tax payers money while giving them the best fire protection.

MVFD Fire Chief, Nick Raver met with Lew Sieber, manager of the Nebraska Forest Service Fire Shop, to discuss options and to see if the NFS Fire Shop could assist in finding a truck that would work for the department.

Raver says, "I met with Lew and told him we needed a tanker that would hold at least 2,000 gallons and could go off-road. But we could not afford a new truck. He came up with a 2,500 gallon HEMTT (heavy expanded mobility tactical truck)."

HEMMTs are used by the United States Army. The 8x8 off-road trucks are capable of fording water crossings up to 48 inches deep. Standard size for these heavy duty vehicles is over 30 feet long, 8 feet wide, and over 9 feet high. With this type of build, the HEMMT seemed to be a good fit for what the MVFD was looking for.

The fire department took delivery of the tanker in 2013 and spent around $55,000 to get it up and running. Raver says, "We made the truck so it only took one fireman to run the truck. After using the truck for a couple years we went back to the rural board and requested another HEMTT."

In 2015 the MVFD acquired a second HEMTT bringing their ability to transport and utilize 5,000 gallons of water. Both trucks are equipped with spray bars and monitoring guns for field fires. The 2nd truck was also outfitted with a PyroLance which is a specialized, ultra-high pressure spraying tool for fire fighting.

> ***"By making these trucks into multiple use emergency vehicles, we have saved our district around $600,000."***
>
> ***- Nick Raver, MVFD Fire Chief***

Raver notes, "Since getting the two trucks we have been mutual aided to five different counties. We have used the trucks for all fires, car accidents, snow storms and most recent a water rescue."

He says, "By making these trucks into multiple use emergency vehicles, we have saved our district around $600,000. They also serve as a great recruiting tool, it's not every day you see a fire truck like this! The rural community has no idea how many tax dollars are saved by this program."

Tending to all the Details - the NFS Fire Shop Staff

There are a lot of steps that must take place before an FPP vehicle reaches a fire department. A dedicated crew at the NFS Fire Shop sees to the many specifics and duties.

Office assistant, **Darla Huff** welcomes patrons who walk through the door at the NFS Fire Shop with a friendly smile. She verifies and maintains contact lists, handles billing, and completes the "official paperwork" for placing and licensing vehicles.

Lew Sieber is the program manager/screener at the NFS Fire Shop. He locates equipment, meets with and matches VFD's to that equipment, manages the NFS fleet of vehicles, and oversees the construction of single engine air tanker (SEAT) bases.

Shop foreman, **Jim Nelson,** interacts with customers about repairs and oversees the shop operations. He is responsible for assigning projects to the mechanics, monitoring safety training, and developing "how-to" instructions for VFD's to complete repairs as needed in the field. Jim is also a backup truck driver.

Doug Beck is the NFS Fire Shop's senior mechanic. He performs repairs, processes equipment to be placed with VFD's and is a backup truck driver.

As line mechanic, **Ron Gore** performs repairs and processes equipment. Parts/inventory specialist, **Randy Markwardt**, is the front line for parts both in the shop and over the phone when the VFD's call. Randy is also our safety officer for the fire shop.

Part-time assistance is provided by a team of dedicated employees. **Eldon Moser** takes care of ground maintenance. He keeps the facility looking good outside, mowing grass, keeping weeds at bay, and putting away trucks. He is also a backup driver. **Rich Osterloh** is a part-time mechanic and SEAT base constructor - he specializes in fire truck repair and doubles in the field, constructing SEAT bases. **Abe Lineberry** and **Jay Weyers** serve as part-time drivers.

Full-time NFS Fire Shop staff includes: (l-r) Ron Gore, Jim Nelson, Randy Markwardt, Doug Beck, Darla Huff, and Lew Sieber.

Farewell Reception for Extension Educator Karna Dam

Wednesday, Oct. 5

4-6 p.m. * *Informal presentation @ 5 p.m.*
at the August N. Christenson Research and Education Building

Extension Educator Karna Dam has worked with many 4-H families, schools, youth, and provided various educational presentations and opportunities since she joined the Saunders County Extension team in 2007. Karna has transitioned into a new role as an Extension Educator in Dodge County. Please join us as we recognize her educational efforts and wish her well in her new position.

Aerial Truck Acquired by NFS Fire Shop Leads to First of a Kind Joint Fire Department Partnership

Polk County volunteer fire departments are repeat customers of the NFS Fire Shop. The county has acquired nine different vehicles/apparatus. The Polk Volunteer Fire Department (VFD) utilizes a pumper, 2 tankers, and command vehicle. The Osceola VFD acquired a rescue and command vehicle. And the Stromsburg VFD acquired a tanker and a grass rig from the program. That's eight.

But it is the ninth vehicle acquired for the county that garners the most attention. In December 2014, Truck #1, a 2003 E-one Bronto aerial ladder fire truck, left the NFS Fire Shop and headed for a new home in Polk County.

It's rather uncommon for rural fire departments to have an aerial truck. The biggest obstacle is most departments don't have an extra $500,000-$1 million or so laying around to spend on a new one or the tax payers willing or wanting to foot that kind of bill. But what if you could purchase that same truck with 30,000 miles on it for 1/10th or less of that cost...say, $3,000 when all is said and done?

An aerial truck is an excellent fire-fighting/rescue resource for elevated areas and hard to reach areas. The truck carries a ladder that can reach over 100 feet. The ladder can be moved in all directions. In rural communities, oftentimes buildings in town are very close together and fires can spread quickly amongst them. And in rural areas, there are many buildings that are long and wide, or very tall, such as a grain elevator. The aerial truck makes reaching those areas easier and quicker.

But you don't just pull into the parking lot of the NFS Fire Shop and see several aerial trucks just sitting there waiting for homes. They aren't a high turnover item through the Federal Excess Personal Property Program (FEPP). And there are rules about who can utilize this type of truck and specialized training is required. The Nebraska Volunteer Firefighters Association is consulted on placement of aerial trucks for best coverage.

Stromsburg Volunteer Fire Department Chief, Tim Pallas says, "After much discussion with the NFS and others involved, we were able to secure an aerial fire truck. Stromsburg had just built a new fire hall and had the room to house this equipment and it's somewhat centered in the county."

Stromsburg, Polk, and Osceola volunteer fire departments combined efforts and resources and jointly acquired the truck and Polk Truck Company #1 (PSO #1) was formed. Training and setting up the new truck company had to be done before the truck could be placed into service.

Pallas says, "Our departments were all aware of the NFS program and as our fleets become more aged, we all were going to need to update equipment. So we checked into what equipment could be obtained. And it was a lot more than the "old" stuff."

But there still was the issue of having trained volunteers. He said, "We asked our members that wanted to commit to the additional training for this truck to volunteer. Between the three departments we have over 30 members that made the commitment to PSO #1."

This photo at a Polk County farm grain facility shows the capabilities PSO #1 aerial truck has to reach high places. While the truck does not reach the tops of the very tall commercial elevators, it will reach many of the farmer-owned grain setups which is helpful in the situations of grain bin rescue or any other emergency that may happen at that height.

And there were some additional benefits for the Polk County community as well. Pallas states, "One huge benefit that has come about from the acquisition of this truck is the fact that Stromsburg, Polk, and Osceola members are training together more and it has made all of our departments better when we actually respond to calls together."

And that spirit of cooperation has reached out beyond the Polk County line. Pallas says, "Since we now have this truck in service, we have taken it to some public service events in neighboring towns. For instance, we took the truck to Central City when they were burning some buildings."

According to Pallas, if Polk County volunteer fire departments had to purchase and update these vehicles through the normal budget process, the purchases most likely would not have happened. He says, "The equipment we were currently using would have only gotten older and more unreliable. And then when you are finally forced to update this equipment, the cost to the taxpayers is much higher. Our departments are able to update/replace equipment at a much better deal for the taxpayers using the FEPP program."

Photos provided by PSO #1

The aerial truck is utilized on fire/rescue calls around Polk County. Above, Polk Truck Company #1 (PSO #1) was called in to assist the Stromsburg Volunteer Fire Department with a structure fire in their rural district.

Nebraska Forest Service Fire Shop - *Continued from page 1*

bars, electrical converters and, if necessary, hard tops are often added to each vehicle, making them suitable for use by rural fire districts.

Cooperating fire districts are responsible for painting the vehicle within six months of receiving it from the NFS Fire Shop. Additionally, districts must keep the truck's water load within specifications and maintain the truck while in use.

Benefits to Cooperating Fire Districts

Vehicles and equipment used for fire suppression and firefighting are usually highly specialized. So buying brand new can be quite costly for fire districts. Nebraska citizens want reliable fire protection, but also prefer to pay reasonable taxes for that service. Conversion of U.S. military vehicles can result in substantial savings on the final price tag for equipment. The FEPP program allows fire districts to obtain essential fire-fighting equipment at a fraction of what it would cost if buying similar equipment brand new.

Nebraska rural fire districts also benefit from resources provided by the NFS Fire for reducing vehicle maintenance costs. This includes securing parts for vehicles and providing complimentary maintenance checks during each vehicle's bi-annual inventory.

Mechanics can also provide routine vehicle maintenance at the NFS Fire Shop or fire districts may use a trusted local mechanic. As part of the Fire Shop's goal of remaining service-oriented, two mobile repair units are available to respond to the maintenance needs of cooperating fire districts. These units will be available to provide routine repairs, as well as on-site support for cooperating districts in the event of catastrophic fires.

In addition to the 260 fire districts previously mentioned, there are 3 state agencies (Nebraska Emergency Management Agency (NEMA), State Fire Marshall Nebraska, and Nebraska Game and Parks), 1 volunteer organization (Nebraska State Volunteer Fire Fighters Association) and numerous emergency management regions across the state that utilize FEPP equipment. Currently, 85-100 pieces are being placed across Nebraska on an annual basis.

While the cost savings are obvious, it's important not to overlook that the overarching benefit of the program to Nebraskans is to increase the capacity of rural fire departments to protect lives and property.

For more information about the Nebraska Forest Service's FEPP program or to inquire about equipment availability, contact Lew Sieber at (402) 624-8061 or lsieber2@unl.edu.

Long-Term Employees Retire

Two long-term employees retired recently. **Dave Werner** retired after 44 years with the University of Nebraska. As an Ag Research Technician with the Farm Operations Unit at the ARDC, Dave started in 1972 and assisted with seeing many crops through from seed to harvest.

ARDC Director Mark Schroeder presenting a certificate of recognition to Dave Werner.

Sharron Ankersen retired after 20 years of service to Saunders County Extension. She provided support to the Saunders County 4-H program. Over the years, Sharron assisted families in many ways with their 4-H needs. Her passion for the 4-H program impacted the lives of many 4-Hers over the years.

Sharron Ankersen

Beyond the Fire Shop NFS in Your Community

The focus of the feature unit in this edition of this newsletter is on the Nebraska Forest Service's (NFS) Fire Shop because the shop is located at the ARDC. But the NFS is involved in many other areas impacting communities across the state.

The NFS provides education and services to the people of Nebraska to ensure the health and sustainability of our state's rural and community forest resources. Additionally, the NFS Wildland Fire Control Program provides fire protection and planning assistance to Volunteer Fire Districts throughout the state.

Wildfire Prevention: While equipment has been featured thus far, the NFS Wildland Fire Protection Program also provides service in the areas of: training, prevention and aviation.

Unlike most states, the NFS does not have a fire suppression force. The work of this agency is aimed at helping maximize the impact of the existing (predominantly volunteer) force of local firefighters across the state. The 476 rural fire districts that blanket the state collectively have more than 14,000 firefighters. A well-developed system of 58 Mutual Aid Districts covers virtually all of the state. Mutual Aid is used when local resources prove inadequate to handle a large or complex wildfire incident. Under existing mutual aid agreements, neighboring fire districts can render assistance when needed.

NFS also tracks information about wildfires across the state. Maps of recent fires in Nebraska are at http://go.unl.edu/nebraskawildfirereport.

Wildland Fire Training: The NFS provides training to rural fire districts in several ways. Classes are conduct in numerous communities across the state as well as at Mutual Aid Schools and State Fire School. NFS also provides current knowledge, training materials and funding to the Nebraska State Fire Marshal's Training Division for the delivery of wildland fire courses.

Examples of classes taught by NFS fire management specialists at the Nebraska Fire School include: ignition operations for wildland and prescribed fire, aerial firefighting resources, and structure protection during rural/urban interface wildfires.

The Nebraska Wildlife Fire Academy is presented by the NFS and is supported by U.S. Forest Service, Nebraska Emergency Management Agency (NEMA), Fort Robinson State Park, Nebraska State Fire Marshals, National Weather Service, and the National Park Service. The academy provides high quality training through experienced wildland fire instructors from around the Nation, Rocky Mountain Region, and Nebraska to ensure training needs for Nebraska firefighters and the surrounding region are met.

Aerial Fire Suppression: The Wildfire Control Act of 2013 enabled the establishment of Single Engine Air Tanker (SEAT) bases in Nebraska. Nebraska has a long history of utilizing aerial applicators for fire suppression and the addition of permanent bases further enhances fire aviation and initial attack capabilities. SEAT bases are manned by NFS staff during the fire season, primarily working with a SEAT on contract to Nebraska through our partners at the Nebraska Emergency Management Agency.

Permanent SEAT bases have been established in Valentine, Chadron, Alliance and Cozad. In addition, a mobile SEAT base to support operations at airports without a permanent base was completed and a second mobile base is planned.

There are 22 aerial applicator companies, with 45 airplanes, who have agreed to cooperate with the NFS, in the Aerial Fire Suppression program. Additionally, there are 20 locations around the state where firefighting foam is stored specifically for use in the aerial suppression of wildfires.

Also cooperating in this program are: Nebraska Department of Aeronautics, Nebraska County Sheriffs, and the Nebraska State Patrol.

Fuels Treatment Program: NFS also administers a forest fuels treatment program. Plant life growing beneath the forest canopy, such as brush, seedlings, and saplings, growing near larger trees that form the canopy in wooded areas are known as "ladder fuels". These ladder fuels serve as a pathway for ground fires to become highly destructive crown fires – the type of fire that burns quickly jumping from tree crown to tree crown ahead of the ground fire.

Forest landowners can take steps to reduce forest fuel loads on their land, thus creating an environment less prone to crown fires and rapid fire spread. During fuels treatment projects, timber is removed either mechanically or by hand. Leftover debris, also called slash, is typically scattered and left to decompose or piled for controlled burning or wildlife habitat. In some cases, the slash is chipped and used as fuel by institutions with wood energy systems, such as Chadron State College.

This program is currently open to forest land-owners in the Pine Ridge and Niobrara Valley areas. But fuels treatment programs may spread to other areas of the state to address growing concerns about hazardous coniferous forest fuel loads. Contact the NFS for more details.

Educational Resources: Whether it is providing mini-grants for seedling trees at events, tree care workshops for landscape industry professionals, information on how to find and hire a certified arborist, providing volunteer fire assistance grants for training or equipment in rural areas, or recognizing a community for their greenspace contributions, the NFS provides educational programs and resources across the state.

Most notably in recent news, has been the confirmation of Emerald Ash Borer (EAB) within the state. On June 8, Nebraska Department of Agriculture confirmed an EAB infestation in Pulaski Park, in southeastern Omaha. EAB has also been found in Greenwood. Nebraska Extension and the NFS have been releasing information and providing workshops for homeowners on how best to deal with EAB.

EAB is just one of the many topics that the NFS arms the public with information on. Whether it is finding ways to save ponderosa pine forests or controlling Eastern Red Cedar, selecting new seedlings or dealing with a storm damaged tree, or providing environmental education to youth, NFS provides a wide range of resources on how to protect, restore and utilize Nebraska's tree and forest resources. NFS is engaged with the public in finding solutions and sharing that information.

Learn more about the Nebraska Forest Service at: http://nfs.unl.edu

On June 8, Nebraska Department of Agriculture confirmed an Emerald Ash Borer (EAB) infestation in Pulaski Park, in southeastern Omaha. EAB has also been found in Greenwood. Nebraska Extension and the Nebraska Forest Service (NFS) are providing homeowners with the information to assist in making decisions about the care of ash trees. Treatment is not recommended until EAB has been confirmed within 15 miles of your location. NFS provides comprehensive information at: www.eabne.info.

This issue of the *ARDC Today* was produced and edited by **Deloris Pittman**, Marketing and Promotions Manager.
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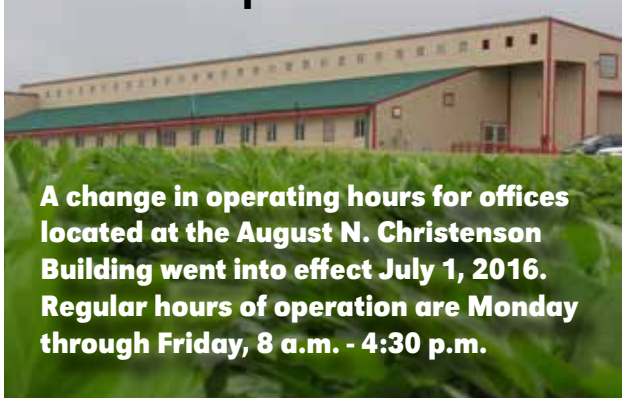
On the web at: *ardc.unl.edu*. Email: dpittman1@unl.edu. Nebraska Extension in Saunders County and the Southeast Research and Extension Center administrative offices are located at the ARDC. Links are located on the ARDC website.

Change in Operating Hours at Christenson Building

8 a.m. - 4:30 p.m. M-F



A change in operating hours for offices located at the August N. Christenson Building went into effect July 1, 2016. Regular hours of operation are Monday through Friday, 8 a.m. - 4:30 p.m.

IANR Outstanding Employee

Lisa Hastings with the Greater Nebraska Business Center was recently honored with the Outstanding Employee Award. This award is presented by the University of Nebraska's Institute of Agriculture and Natural Resources (IANR).

This is a very high honor as recipients are selected from the statewide pool of University employees. Letters of nomination are submitted in support of the candidate's qualifications by staff and faculty that work closely with the employee.

Nominators stated, "Lisa strives to understand the big picture of UNL business operations. She willingly accepts new challenges with a positive attitude. She consistently handles a large volume of very detail-oriented financial support work efficiently and accurately. Lisa's ability to understand what goes on behind the numbers allows her to identify issues and take care of them independently. She is proactive, a problem-solver and a true team player." *Lisa is pictured above (center) receiving the award from Carol Cartwright, IANR Business Operations Director (left) and Ruby Urban, Assistant Director, IANR Business Operations Greater Nebraska Business Center (right).*

What's On The Calendar

Learn more at: ardc.unl.edu

OCT	3-6	Ag Literacy Festival
OCT	5	Farewell Reception for Karna Dam
OCT	11	Regional Collegiate Soil Judging Practice
OCT	18	UNMC High School Alliance Visit
OCT	20	Olli Renewable Energy Tour
NOV	2	4-H Council Meeting
NOV	11	Husker Nutrition Conference
NOV	22	Ag Land Management Workshop
NOV	24-25	Christenson Bldg. CLOSED

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