

Views from VanDeWalle

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Nebraska LEAD Program

Early in my Extension career, I met twenty-nine talented individuals with a passion of agriculture through the Nebraska LEAD program. To date, I remain friends with many of them and the networking opportunities have been tremendous. The in-state seminars challenged me to think outside of the box and remain an advocate for agriculture. I could go on and on about the excellent opportunities the LEAD program has provided, but I challenge you to experience it yourself!

The Nebraska LEAD Program is dedicated to building future Nebraska leaders so that our food and fiber system is preserved and enhanced. If you would like to be a part of the leadership necessary to chart the course . . . now and in the future, and you are presently involved in production agriculture or agribusiness, there will never be a better time to make application to the Nebraska LEAD Program. Fellowship applications for the next Nebraska LEAD (Leadership Education/Action Development) Group are now available for men and women involved in production agriculture or agribusiness and are due on June 15. Up to 30 motivated men and women with demonstrated leadership potential are selected annually for the Nebraska LEAD Program. Generally, the program is for people between the ages of 25-55 years of age.

In addition to monthly three-day seminars throughout Nebraska from mid-September through late March each year, Nebraska LEAD Fellows also participate in a 10-day National Study/Travel Seminar during the first year and a two-week International Study/Travel Seminar during the second year.

Content essential to leadership focuses on public policy issues, natural resources, community development, interpersonal skill development, communications, education, economics, and social and cultural understanding. Soon beginning its 39th year, the program is operated by the Nebraska Agricultural Leadership Council, a nonprofit organization in collaboration with the University of Nebraska-Lincoln's Institute of Agriculture and Natural Resources and in cooperation with Nebraska colleges and universities, business and industry, and individuals throughout the state.

Applications are due no later than June 15 and are available via e-mail from the Nebraska LEAD Program. Please contact Shana at sgerdes2@unl.edu. You may also request an application by calling (402) 472-6810.

Nebraska LEAD Program offices are in the Institute of Agriculture and Natural Resources at the University of Nebraska-Lincoln. If you are even thinking about applying, contact me and I'd be more than happy to share my experiences with you and visit with you about this life-changing opportunity!