The mission of the Nebraska Farm Bureau Foundation is to engage youth, educators, and the general public to promote an understanding of the vital importance of agriculture in the lives of all Nebraskans.

Scholarships & Awards

The Foundation awards scholarships and recognizes agricultural education teachers in Nebraska through the Nebraska Agricultural Education Teacher Retention Award and the Nebraska Agricultural Education Student Teaching Scholarship.

In 2017, 16 agricultural education teachers from across Nebraska were awarded over $14,000. The award aims to keep agricultural educators in Nebraska as FFA programs in schools continue to grow.

Ten students enrolled in the Agricultural Education Teaching Program at the University of Nebraska-Lincoln each received a $1,500 scholarship to use during their student teaching semester. Each student demonstrated a passion for agriculture and their excitement to continue to grow the agricultural education and FFA programs in Nebraska.

The Foundation received the 2017 National Teach Ag Champion award for implementing effective strategies to recruit and retain high quality and diverse agricultural teachers.

The Freeman FFA chapter engages in training for the Connecting Chapters Program.

Supporting the Future of Agriculture

The Connecting Chapters program equips high school FFA members to connect with elementary students and peers to increase agricultural literacy – awareness, knowledge, and appreciation – in their communities.

There are currently 57 FFA Chapters participating in the program. The Foundation will train more than 1,500 FFA students to connect with their local schools and partner with their County Farm Bureaus to increase agricultural literacy in their area.

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Forty-eight years ago, Keith and Doris Olsen started their partnership together. They vowed to be by each other through sickness and health and be each other’s partners for eternity.

It all started when Keith was a senior at the University of Nebraska-Lincoln. A close friend invited him to go on a blind date with a farm girl from Scribner who was in nursing school in Omaha. On their second date, then, Doris Meyer said she would never marry a farmer. In 1969, at the age of 24, Keith married Doris. Soon after, his father died, and together they took over the Olsen family farm near Venango. It’s hard to farm without a strong partner. Keith and Doris worked hard on the farm and together raised their three sons, Craig, Jeff, and Curtis to build a strong family foundation. Craig is an ag leader, Curtis is a Methodist minister, and Jeff farms where four Olsen generations have farmed. In 2017, the Olsen family farm was awarded the Nebraska Pioneer Farm Award for having consecutively held ownership of the family land for 100 years. Keith and Doris Olsen have embraced their faith, family, and farming, teaming up with their sons, their church, and Nebraska Farm Bureau to grow both crops and future leaders. During his time as president of Nebraska Farm Bureau, Keith made it a point to focus on youth in ag, and he remains an active supporter of the Nebraska Farm Bureau Foundation, 4-H, FFA, and the Nebraska LEAD program.

Partnering with the Foundation
Through support of the Foundation’s programs, including Agriculture in the Classroom, Ag Pen Pals, and scholarships, Keith continues his investment in the future of agriculture.

“We were Ag Pen Pals with a classroom in Lincoln. We would visit our classroom and bring in crop samples and seeds. It was critical for these students to understand that their food was coming from farmers in their own state,” Olsen said.

Foundation Partnerships
According to Keith, the importance of bringing rural and urban students together can’t be understated. The Foundation connects with students at agriculture festivals presented in partnership with Nebraska Extension and Nebraska commodity groups. Through the Connecting Chapters Program, the Foundation equips FFA members across the state to bring ag literacy activities into elementary classrooms filled with students from cities and farms. Scholarships for ag teachers and activities of the Promotion & Education Committee round out the Foundation’s efforts to connect consumers with the farm and ranch families that provide their food, fuel, and fiber.

In keeping with its mission to support the future of Nebraska agriculture, the Nebraska Farm Bureau Foundation awarded scholarships to four participants of Classes 37 and 38 of the Nebraska LEAD program. The LEAD program improves leadership skills and abilities of Nebraska’s future agricultural leaders through exposure to diverse topics, issues, concerns, points of view, and innovative ideas.

LEAD scholarship recipients, L-R Bree A. DeNaeyer and MerleAnn Raichart, with Megan Schaefer (executive director, Nebraska Farm Bureau Foundation) Not pictured: Chris McQuillan and Hannah Rupprecht.

Growing Potential Ag Festival
More than 300 fifth graders from Northeast Nebraska gained firsthand knowledge of where their food, fiber, and fuel come from by attending the first ever Growing Potential Ag Festival in Jackson, Nebraska last summer. The Nebraska Farm Bureau Foundation partnered with the Northeast Nebraska Corn Growers to present this inaugural festival, with more than 15 sponsors coming together to create a success ful event. FFA Chapters from Pender and Wisner also volunteered at the event.

Keith showing a replica tractor to his Ag Pen Pal classroom in Lincoln.

Keith and Doris Olsen looking out over their family’s land in Perkins county.

LEAD Scholarship
Event Highlights

LEAD Scholarship

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