

THREE NEW LEADERS BRING EXPERIENCE AND EXPERTISE TO THE NEBRASKA FARM BUREAU FOUNDATION BOARD

The Nebraska Farm Bureau (NEFB) Foundation has appointed three new members to its board of directors, adding experience in production agriculture, agribusiness leadership, and agricultural education from across the state.



SHANA BEATTIE



JERRY DARNELL



KAREN GRANT

The new board members are Shana Beattie of Dawson County, Jerry Darnell of Scotts Bluff County, and NEFB Promotion and Engagement Chair Karen Grant of Madison County.

“Shana, Jerry, and Karen have all spent years giving back to agriculture, not just working in it,” said Megahn Schafer, executive director of the Nebraska Farm Bureau Foundation. “Their experience supporting education, youth programs, and leadership initiatives in their communities will help guide the Foundation’s work across Nebraska.”

NEW NEBRASKA CORN VIRTUAL FIELD TRIP SERIES

Take your students inside a Nebraska corn farm without leaving school. These short, on-demand virtual field trip videos help students connect science, social studies, technology, and sustainability to food and products they use every day.

Included for your classroom:

- Four engaging videos, approximately 10 minutes each, filmed on a working Nebraska farm
 - Corn Planting
 - Growing with Sustainability
 - Harvest
 - Storage and Trade
- Four ready-to-use lesson plans with student worksheets
- Clear alignment to Nebraska 5th Grade Content Area Standards

Use one video as a lesson hook or teach the full series as a standards-aligned unit. While the lessons are designed for classrooms, the videos also work well for camps, clubs, and after-school or summer programs.

This video series was made possible through the generous support of the Nebraska Corn Board



PHOTO COURTESY OF MITCH AND LAURA OSWALD



“The right time... Over the years, every sector of farming and ranching has been through good times and bad. We have suffered from low prices and the effects of Mother Nature. From flooding to fires, many have felt the pressure of these circumstances and events. This may not be the right time for you, but remember, when those good times come, it is the right time to support the Nebraska Farm Bureau Foundation.” - Steve Nelson

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MAKING THE CONNECTION

SPRING 2026

Something Everyone Can Do



Steve Nelson

One perfect moment of summer, long ago, in a field of golden wheat, a boy drove his dad’s combine alone.

The brand-new combine!

It was 1967. The boy was 12. He felt confident at the controls. It wasn’t the first time he’d run a combine alone – just the first time running the new one.

He looked at the good land. He looked at the good wheat. The blue Nebraska sky. Everything in that moment seemed to flow, and a thought made its way into his heart:

This is what I want to do.

“It just struck me right then – life can’t get much better than this.”

Steve Nelson, a former president of Nebraska Farm Bureau, smiles as he tells this story.

This Zoom interview, he says, may run longer than you expect.

“I usually can talk plenty,” he says. “One of my high school friends



Steve and Elma Nelson enjoy a moment with their children, grandchildren and Steve's mother, Shirley Ann, after accepting the Nebraska Farm Bureau Silver Eagle Award in 2024.

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said – after I became Farm Bureau president – ‘I always knew Steve would do something that involved talking!’”

It’s a trait that helped him in his role with Farm Bureau, talking with farmers and ranchers across the state, speaking up for them and their grassroot issues. It’s a trait he’s happy to use now, he says, to promote the Nebraska Farm Bureau Foundation.

The Foundation’s mission – telling the Nebraska agriculture story to schoolkids, supporting their teachers, engaging people across the state – is important. So many Nebraskans now are generations

removed from the land, yet everyone is affected by the state’s agricultural economy.

He grew up on the family farm near Axtell, in Kearney County, on the land his great-great grandpa homesteaded in 1878.

An aerial photo of a farm hangs on the wall behind him. It’s the farm he bought as a young man out of college. That’s where he lives now with his wife, Elma. It’s where they raised their kids: Scott, Sarah, and Stacy. It’s not far from that old homestead, which is still in the family.

The generations who came before him, Steve says, were people of deep faith – a trait he shares. His faith helped pull him out of a deep hole,

about two decades ago, when the worst storm you can imagine struck his family.

You expect parents and grandparents to go before you, he says.

Not your kids.

Sarah was their youngest child. She was a cheerleader. A writer. A lover of history and English. She loved to edit his Farm Bureau speeches.

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“She’d say, ‘I don’t know what you’re talking about, but it sounds good.’”

“She was a sweetheart. I could go on and on about her.”

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Sarah had been born with hip dysplasia. Just before her final year of college, Steve’s wife Elma traveled with Sarah to the Mayo Clinic for a second surgery. The first one went well. The second one went well, too, but two days later, something went wrong.

“The doctor who saw her last, he told us, ‘She waved and told me to have a great day.’”

At the time, he says, they knew they had to move forward, even though they wanted to crawl in a hole.

But there was a silver lining.

The summer before Sarah died, she and her mom had watched a movie together. In that movie, a dying girl donated her organs so someone else

could live. Sarah told her mom, “if anything ever happens to me, give them everything. This is what I want to do.”

Soon, a young mother from Wisconsin was breathing through Sarah’s lungs. The woman had twins, a boy and a girl.

“She got to live to see her children grow up, all because of Sarah’s lungs.”

Steve was about Sarah’s age when he first became involved with Farm Bureau.

With a degree in agriculture under his belt, he went to the county fair and struck up a conversation with one of his dad’s friends at the Kearney/Franklin County Farm Bureau booth. The man was on the board. He encouraged him to get involved.

Steve began on the county board, serving five years before joining the legislative policy committee. He was later elected to the state board, served four years as first vice president, and then was elected president of Nebraska Farm Bureau, a role he held for nine years until retiring in 2020. He saw Nebraska Farm Bureau’s impact on the state.

He saw the impact of its Foundation, too.

Maybe now more than ever, he says, in a world where “fads” often replace “facts” when government officials talk about agricultural issues, it’s important to help the Foundation keep telling the true story of agriculture – using both

science and common sense.

That is why he and his wife are pleased to include a gift to the Foundation in their wills.

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“We’re not talking huge amounts of money. I think it’s just something everyone can do, and certainly, we encourage others to do, too.”

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“We stand on the shoulders of those who came before us and helped us,” he says, “and we believe it’s our duty to leave something for the next generations of the state, as well as for our children.”

Son Scott has three children. He built a house across from the old

homestead. Daughter Stacy lives in Ashland, Nebraska, and has two children. Steve thinks maybe some of those grandkids will farm someday.

They’d be the seventh generation.

“Scott runs the show now. I tell him, ‘I want to keep helping, as long as I’m not wrecking stuff!’”

Scott still lets him run the combine.

On some perfect days, alone in the combine, he looks back at his life and sees a boy.

This is what I want to do.

“A lot of times, I don’t think of myself as being 70 years old and sort of retired. I still sometimes think – when I’m out in the field – that I’m that boy again.”



Sarah Nelson (left), who passed away unexpectedly, is remembered here alongside her brother Scott, her mom Elma, sister Stacy, and her dad Steve Nelson during a special evening together.