April/May 2014

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Calendar of Events
May 3-4: Toast Nebraska Wine Fest at Mahoney State Park.
May 14: Quarterly Staff Meeting, 9-10 a.m., 150 Keim.
July 17: Active Shooter Awareness, Koan Nissen, UNLPD, 12-1 p.m., Nebraska Union.
July 23: Nebraska Turfgrass Research Field Day, Mead, Neb.
Aug. 13: 100-Year Extension Anniversary Open House will be held at the Haskell Ag. Lab near Concord, Neb. Time of open house will be announced later. Trolley will be available for tours.

2014 Annual Appreciation Banquet

By Kathy Schindler
The weather outside was cold and rainy but the atmosphere inside was warm and cheerful as the Department of Agronomy & Horticulture held its Annual Appreciation Banquet April 3 at the Lied Commons in downtown Lincoln.

More than 100 faculty, students & staff attended the banquet to honor the achievements of students, faculty and staff. The keynote speaker was Ryan Pekarek from Pekarek’s Produce near Dwight, Neb. A UNL horticulture graduate, Pekarek’s speech was titled, “Fitting a Round Peg in a Square Hole.”

Presentations were given by department clubs, including Agronomy Club, Horticulture Club, Pi Alpha Xi honor society, Range Management Club, Turf Club, and the Agronomy & Horticulture Graduate Student Association (AHGSA).

Felicia Benes won the Pi Alpha Xi Scholarship. The ASHS Outstanding Undergraduate Award went to Sarah Blecha, and Dr. Paul Read won the President’s Citation. Sam McConaughy won the Outstanding AHGSA Member Award.

Appreciation Banquet continued on page 2
Calendar of Events

Aug. 21: West Central Crops and Water Field Day at Water Resources Field Lab at Brule, Neb.

Aug. 22: Quarterly Staff Meeting, 8-9 a.m., 150 Keim (note revised date).


Nov. 17: Quarterly Staff Meeting, 10–11 a.m., 150 Keim.

March 5-7, 2015: 18th Annual Forum & Trade Show at the Omaha Marriott, 10220 Regency Circle, Omaha, Neb.

Promotions

Congratulations goes out to the following employees.

- **Jeffrey Mower** promoted to Associate Professor & Granted Tenure
- **Dipka Santra** promoted to Associate Professor & Granted Tenure
- **Clyde Ogg** promoted to Extension Educator

The Range Boss Award was presented to Kyra Baldwin.

Allison Siekman won the Dr. Massengale Outstanding Senior Award.

A silent auction was held to raise funds for the AHGSA and an iPad mini was raffled. Susan Thomas, from the HAPPI Business Center, won the iPad Mini. The AHGSA raised more than $300 that will be used towards traveling scholarships.

"Thank you to all who attended the spring banquet and helped raise funds toward the scholarships. We had a great turn out this year!"

- Sam McConaughy & Katherine Frels

Appreciation Banquet continued from page 1

Backyard Farmer is Back

Backyard Farmer, featuring faculty members from the Department of Agronomy & Horticulture, airs live Thursdays on NET1 at 7 p.m. from April through September. Join us for another great season of answering your lawn & garden questions. View archived videos on YouTube, or interact with the team on Facebook, Twitter, and Pinterest.
Announcements

Dr. Tom Elthon Retires

A retirement reception was held on Friday, April 25, 2014 for Dr. Tom Elthon, Associate Professor, Department of Agronomy & Horticulture, Center for Biotechnology Manager, Protein Core Research Facility.

Condolences

The department offers sincerest condolences to Susan Thomas, whose father, Steven Novotny, passed away Sat. March 8, 2014, at age 86. His obituary can be found at http://journalstar.com/lifestyles/announcements/obituaries/novotny-steven/article_4821fa5-fc2d-5596-9861-2403d83968c.html.

Our sympathy is also extended to Steve Baenziger, whose mother passed away on Monday, March 24, 2014, at age 95. Jean was a resident at the Legacy Estates in Lincoln for the past two years. Her obituary can be found at http://www.roperandsons.com/obituary/jean-irene-baenziger/lincoln-ne/1365139.

Happy News

Christina Bavougian gave birth to Amelia Louise at 11:11 a.m. Saturday, April 12, 2014. Amelia was recorded as 20.5 inches and 7 pounds, 10 ounces. Both Christina and Amelia are doing great, as are Daddy Matt and Sister Sophie.

Department Welcomes New Employees

Katie King joined the department on Feb. 3, 2014, as a Research Technician and Buffalo Grass Breeding coordinator for Keenan Amundsen. Prior to working for UNL, she was a horticulturalist at Jenkins Arboretum in the Philadelphia, Pa., area. Katie received her degree in biology from Samford University in Birmingham, Ala., and a master’s in Public Garden Administration from Cornell University, Ithaca, N.Y. She claims Bristol, Tenn., as her hometown and in her spare time enjoys running, cooking/eating, gardening, sports, outdoors and volunteering. Katie’s fiancé is Bill Kreuser, an assistant professor in the Department of Agronomy & Horticulture. They are planning an August wedding. Welcome Katie!

Please welcome, Dr. Roger Elmore, who re-joined the Department of Agronomy & Horticulture on Jan. 13, 2014, as an Extension Cropping Systems Agronomist. Many employees may remember Roger from his time in Nebraska as an Agronomy & Horticulture faculty member from 1987–2005. Between these two stints in Nebraska, Roger served as an Extension Corn Agronomist at Iowa State University in Ames, Iowa. Roger received his Ph.D. and master’s degrees from University of Illinois. He earned his bachelor’s from Illinois State University and an associate degree from Illinois Valley Community College.

Originally from Princeton, Ill., he and his wife, Ann, have one daughter, two sons and four grandchildren. His hobbies include spending time with his grandchildren and gardening. He also spent time in the Peace Corps in Malaysia. Welcome back Roger!

Bijesh Maharjan started working for the Department of Agronomy & Horticulture on Dec. 5, 2013, as a Postdoctoral Research Associate for Dr. Richard Ferguson. He received his Ph.D. from the University of Minnesota in 2013, his master’s from University of North Dakota in 2008, and his bachelor’s from Moscow State University of Food Production in Moscow, Russia, in 2003.

Bijesh’s major research interests are on nutrient management, soil biogeochemistry and water quality. His current research focuses on understanding mechanisms involved in complex soil nitrogen dynamics, exploring soil amendment that improves soil quality, and examining alternate nitrogen (N) sources and in-season N management to improve plant N use efficiency and reduce N loss.

Originally from Kathmandu, Nepal, he enjoys traveling and learning about new places and cultures, reading, playing music (two-sided drum) and watching or playing soccer. He is married to Erandi Gunapala from Sri Lanka, who has a Ph.D. in physics from the University of North Dakota. Please welcome Bijesh if you see him around the department!
Graduate Students

Awards & Honors

Congratulations to Ben Beckman, advised by Dr. Walter Schacht, for receiving the 2014 Daniel T. Walters Graduate Student Travel Fund Award. This award was established to honor Dr. Walters and his passion for graduate students.

Congratulations to Miles Redden and Ben Beckman, both advised by Drs. W. Schacht and J. Volesky, for being selected to receive the Irvin A. and Agnes E. Nelson Memorial Fellowship. This fellowship commemorates the life of Irvin A. and Agnes E. Nelson and their dedication to the conservation of the soil and other natural resources while farming in Stanton County, Nebraska.

Milton E. Mohr Fellowships

Congratulations to Jonathan Luetchens (A. Lorenz), Pamela Pena Perdomo (T. Clemente), and Rodrigo Werle (J. Lindquist) who have been selected to receive the 2014-2015 Milton E. Mohr Fellowship awarded by the Center for Biotechnology. Dr. Mohr was described in his lifetime as an “…engineer, inventor, entrepreneur, corporate leader” and was instrumental in providing key leadership to young adults. The fellowships are made possible through an endowment to the University Foundation.

Milton E. Mohr Scholarships

Congratulations to our undergraduate Mohr Scholarship recipients, Quinn E. Charling (D. McCallister), Erin L. Kinley (E. Paparozzi), Melinda J. Knuth (D. Lambe), and Jared M. Seier (H. Blanco).

Department Welcomes New Employees

Kara Danforth started working as an administrative associate for Dr. Roch Gaussoin, Agronomy & Horticulture department head, on March 3, 2014. Originally from Hastings, Kara earned her BSBA from Midland University in Fremont. She earned her Master’s of Higher Education Administration (MHEA) degree from Upper Iowa University in Fayette, Iowa. Kara and her husband, John, are expecting their first child this spring. In her free time, Kara enjoys spending time with family and friends, crafts and reading. Kara replaces Charlene Wendt who retired at the end of April.

Dr. Daniel Schachtman, joined the department on Feb. 3, 2014, as a Plant Molecular Physiologist. Prior to moving to Lincoln, Schachtman was a project lead at Monsanto. Originally from Chicago, Ill., he earned his Ph.D. in plant physiology and genetics from The Australian Natural University in 1992. He attended the University of California, Davis, where he received his master’s degree in plant physiology in 1988 and his bachelor’s degree in agricultural economics in 1982.

Schachtman and his wife, Ellen, have a son, Nathan, 22, and a daughter, Rebecca, 19. His hobbies include landscaping and gardening, finance, traveling and hiking/nature. Dr. Schachtman is located in the Beadle Center on city campus.

Dr. Amit Jhala is pleased to announce that Jatinder Singh Aulakh has joined his staff as a postdoctoral research associate. Aulakh earned his Ph.D. in weed science at Auburn University in Auburn, Ala. where he also worked as a graduate research associate.

Aulakh was brought up on a small farm in Punjab state in India. He obtained his MS in agronomy in 2005 and his BS in agriculture in 2001 from Punjab Agricultural University, Ludhiana, India. He also served in the Punjab State Agricultural Extension Department for four years prior to starting his doctoral degree. His current research interests include quantification of pollen-mediated gene flow from ALS-resistant grain sorghum to Johnson grass and development of integrated weed management programs with particular emphasis on prevention/management of herbicide-resistant weed.

In his spare time, he enjoys gardening, fishing, reading and outdoor games.

Welcome to Dr. Bhupinder Singh Farmaha who started working as a postdoctoral research associate on Jan. 4, 2014. He is working for Dr. Patricio Grassini.

Farmaha previously worked as a postdoctoral research associate at the University of Minnesota. He earned his Ph.D. in soil fertility from the University of Illinois – Urbana/Champaign in 2011.

He and his wife have a son, age 2½. His wife is working as a postdoctoral research associate in Houston, Texas. A native of Punjab, India, Farmaha enjoys swimming, walking and dancing.
UNL Agronomy Club hosts SASES Regional Conference

The University of Nebraska-Lincoln Agronomy Club raised more than $40,000 at this year’s Students of Agronomy, Soils, and Environmental Sciences (SASES) Regional Conference held March 27–29.

More than 200 college students from 22 universities across the U.S. attended the three-day conference.

This year, the theme of the conference was "Promoting Agriculture through Social Media," and SASES attendees were encouraged to make posts that advocated agriculture on Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram.

A social media contest also took place for the entire conference where each student competed for the most creative post and the most valued post. These posts on the different social media sites were about the conference, agriculture, and about the state of Nebraska, all with the hashtags #sases2014 and #media4ag.

Going along with the theme, different speakers expressed the importance of social media in agriculture. Janice Person, Social Media Director at Monsanto, taught students about the impact they can make by actively supporting agriculture through social media.

The Agronomy Club highlighted the UNL College of Agricultural Sciences and Natural Resources (CASNR), and showcased the importance of Nebraska agriculture.

SASES attendees walked through the Omaha Zoo jungle before eating their supper in the Jungle Café on Thursday evening.

The students saw Nebraska agriculture firsthand by touring 24 Nebraska ag industries throughout the state on the second day. Some of these industries included Lindsey Irrigation, Behlen Manufacturing Co., Pioneer Hybrids, and E-Energy’s Ethanol Plant.

On the final day of SASES, students experienced career development sessions and heard Dr. Ronnie Green, UNL Vice Chancellor for the Institute of Agriculture and Natural Resources, speak about the sexiness of agriculture.

Saturday night ended with a live band and dance in celebration of the conference.

Steve Waller, dean of the College of Agricultural Sciences and Natural Resources said the event was a success. “The Planning Committee and the entire Agronomy Club are to be complimented on this accomplishment. They are a role model for other clubs in their commitment to serving their profession,” Waller said. “The planning, financing, attention to detail, showcasing Nebraska and the University, program content, entertainment and hospitality were unparalleled and the equal of any professional meeting.”