

NEBRASKA STATE GRANGE NEWS, Margaret E. Smith, Info. Director

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For Immediate Release:

The Nebraska State Grange met at the Riverside Inn/Howard Johnson motel in Grand Island, Nebraska from September 18 to 20, 2009.

The first event was a walking tour on Saturday afternoon in downtown Grand Island including lunch at the Chicken Coop, then a tour of the restored Grand Theater, which brought back many memories. The next stop was the Heartland Antique Mall, which gave the visitors an opportunity to estimate the value of items stored at home. The last stop was the Prairie Winds Art Center with displays of both paintings and photography, also an interesting time.

The convention officially opened Saturday morning. The report from National Grange President, Ed Luttrell was on a DVD allowing him to deliver his own address to those Grangers in attendance.

Joe Fryman, Blair, Nebraska, President of the Nebraska State Grange, gave his annual report. He began by thanking those who had assisted the work of the Grange in the past year including the officers and directors of the organization and the Nebraska Rural Radio Association for the five minutes of air time each Friday at 1:40 PM and the inclusion of Grange input at the quarterly meetings and also their unwavering advocacy for agriculture in the Heartland.

President Fryman paid tribute to Grangers who have passed on in the last year including the State Vice President, Paul Hansen of Blair, in June.

He also addressed the challenges for Agriculture in the past year with a depressed economy, low prices, high cost of production, unusual weather and misinformation from groups with an agenda, such as animal rights groups. We must find ways to counter these threats to our ability to produce safe and abundant food. We must also cope with all the new rules dealing with climate change. How much is caused by man and how much is just normal fluctuation? He quoted an essay written on April 26, 1912 by a farmer on the Kansas/Nebraska border whose idea was that intensive cultivation was causing rain more often and in greater quantity. What would he have written in the "Dirty Thirties"? The same writer also mentioned the challenges in changing from hand tools to horse drawn machines that could cut and bind 13 to 15 acres a day and the difficulty in finding competent men to run them and also the addition of new crops such as alfalfa, fruit trees and honey bees.

President Fryman also touched on Health Care Reform and the need to decide what we do and do not want. Grangers were reminded of the continued presence of the State Grange at the Nebraska Unicameral.

He challenged the membership by saying "Our future will be whatever we make it and success is gained only through perseverance.

The Nebraska Grange tour to Colorado in July was a success again this year and included lunch with the Colorado State Grangers at Victory Grange near Aurora and a tour of the Colorado State Grange Museum. Next year's trip will probably go to Minnesota to the Oliver Hudson Kelly Living History Farm and other locations.

There were several officer changes this year. Kevin Cooksley of Weisert, was elected Vice President, Margaret Smith, Broken Bow, was elected Assistant Steward and Nancy Miller of Fairbury, Ceres.

Representing National Grange was the Communications Director, Jennifer Dugent, who gave several workshops on how to use the interactive web site "Team Speak", noting all the membership building materials that are available from National Grange, all the membership benefits that are available, how to use internet sites such as Craigslist, Twitter, Face Book and others to post Grange events and attract interest among younger people and those looking for places to volunteer.

The Community Service awards to local Granges were presented to the top four Nebraska Granges after the Saturday Lunch. The reports were judged by Pennie Morgan, from the Grand Island Central Community College leadership Development Dept. and she announced the winners.

First place went to Weissert Grange in Custer County. Some of their projects were: Assisting with a benefit raising \$30,000 for a Cochler implant for a local mother of 9, who lost her hearing from meningitis; helping with the Chautauqua in Broken Bow by serving food each evening and setting up a display of items used during the thirties, presenting student dictionaries to all 3rd and 4th graders in Custer County; hosting a hospitality center at the county fair and members helping with the Hospital Rummage sale.

Second place went to South West Grange at Arapahoe. Some of their projects were cleaning up and maintaining a cemetery, furnishing rides for elderly residents to doctors and other appointments and helping with the local food pantry.

Third place was Seward Grange with projects of helping with the Seward July 4th celebration and parade, a Senior Citizens band, supporting the High School Band and youth base ball teams and a swim program.

Fourth place went to Riiverview Grange at Blair. Their projects included supporting the Washington County Recycling program and helping with the Bloodmobile and a Hospital Rummage Sale.

The Nebraska State Grange Scholarship went to Holly Kaelin of Westerville. She is a Student at UNK majoring in History Education and is the daughter of Denise and Scott Kaelin. The Deaf Education Scholarship went to Scott Gies of Broken Bow, who has been hearing impaired most of his life. He is the son of Monte Gies.

The Distinguished Service to Agriculture Award was presented by Kevin Cooksley to former State Senator, Carol Hudkins for her many contributions to Agriculture during her 16 years in the Legislature and her service through many other organizations.

Phyllis Tooker, of Ralston and Family Activities Director, reported that Nebraska Granges presented 1495 Student Dictionaries elementary students across the state, 119 lbs of "Pop Tops" were collected, Nebraska Grangers made more than a table full of stuffed toys to be given to children when they are taken from home into foster care and a bag full of tiny knitted caps and booties for premature babies which were donated to St. Francis Hospital in Grand Island.

The Saturday evening entertainment was a Quartet, "Director's Choice". They are part of the Conestoga Barbershop Chorus. They were an excellent group and were enjoyed very much.