



Pete Ricketts
Governor

Department of Agriculture
Greg Ibach
Director
P.O. Box 94947
Lincoln, NE 68509-4947
(402) 471-2341
Fax: (402) 471-6876
www.nda.nebraska.gov

NEWS RELEASE
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Contact: Christin Kamm
(402) 471-6856

**OMAHA AREA STUDENTS TO EXPLORE AGRICULTURAL CAREERS AT
INAUGURAL NAYI-OMAHA EVENT**

OMAHA – Approximately 150 high school students from Omaha and the greater Omaha area tomorrow will be getting a glimpse at future career opportunities when they attend the first Nebraska Agricultural Youth Institute (NAYI) –Omaha.

The day-long event, being held at the CenturyLink Center in conjunction with AKSARBEN Stock Show and Rodeo, is designed to give students the opportunity to learn about non-traditional careers in the agriculture sector and the availability of those jobs in the Omaha area. NAYI-Omaha is being coordinated by the Nebraska Department of Agriculture (NDA) in partnership with the Greater Omaha Area Chamber of Commerce and the AKSARBEN Foundation.

“There is a very real demand for students studying in areas not typically thought of as being agriculture-related. These are well-paying positions in our industry,” NDA Director Greg Ibach said. “For instance, a student studying engineering could find a job designing grain bins or livestock facilities. A student with an interest in aeronautics could eventually be working for a company that specializes in ag-drones. The opportunities are endless.”

NAYI-Omaha was developed following work of the Greater Omaha Chamber of Commerce over the past year and a half to identify economic strengths within the Omaha region. The result of that effort is the Greater Omaha Economic Partnership Strategy, unveiled at the Governor’s Ag Conference in March. The goal of the strategy is to position Omaha as a global leader for value-added agricultural companies.

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A component of the strategy is to train and educate a workforce that can meet the growing needs of the agribusiness industry. NDA participated in the task force that developed the strategy.

“Discussions with business leaders, time and again, returned to the point that talented individuals are in demand in our agribusiness sector,” said Greater Omaha Chamber Senior Vice President of Economic Development Randy Thelen. “To better position our region for ongoing value-added agriculture development, we need events like NAYI-Omaha to introduce our youth to the idea that they can have a successful career right here with top companies in the agribusiness sector.”

Ibach said NAYI-Omaha is modeled after the department’s week-long summer agriculture youth institute, NAYI, which has been held for the past 44 years. Many of the students who attend the summer event typically come from rural areas or have direct exposure to agriculture.

Ibach said after seeing the Omaha Chamber’s value-added agriculture strategic plan, it made sense to extend NDA’s youth outreach efforts into the Omaha area.

The AKSARBEN Foundation came on as a partner for the NAYI-Omaha event because the concept fits with the Foundation’s work to promote the region’s cultural heritage, including an emphasis on agriculture education and youth events.

“NAYI-Omaha is a great fit for the AKSARBEN activities this weekend,” AKSARBEN Foundation President Jon Burt said. “This is a perfect venue to host both youth who are competing in traditional agriculture experiences, such as showing livestock, and Omaha area students who are exploring opportunities in non-traditional agriculture careers.”

Governor Pete Ricketts is scheduled to address the Omaha-NAYI participants at the opening session Friday morning.

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Note: Media wishing to attend NAYI-Omaha are asked to check-in at the registration desk on the meeting room level of the CenturyLink Center. Questions about the event can be directed to Christin Kamm with the Nebraska Department of Agriculture at christin.kamm@nebraska.gov or, on the day of the event, at 402-440-7251.