

Press Release-For Immediate Release

University of Nebraska-Nebraska College of Technical Agriculture (NCTA)

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NCTA Students Reach Out Overseas

February 9, 2011 (Curtis, NE) - U.S. military service members from around the world will receive care packages from students at the Nebraska College of Technical Agriculture thanks to a new grant from the Mid-Nebraska Community Foundation.

The NCTA Student Senate has been awarded \$1000 to send the care packages to Frontier and Lincoln County service men and women currently stationed overseas. The care packages will contain batteries, socks, sewing kits, playing cards, hygiene products, snacks such as energy bars and beef jerky, and letters from local elementary school children.

NCTA students Erik Williams, Noel Ochoa and Katrina Rotness are heading up the care packages project. They plan to finish by the end of March.

Ochoa said, "I feel this is an important project simply because it allows us to provide something—a good feeling to those who are so far away that will receive these packages. I have a friend in Afghanistan and I'm sure if he were to get one of these it would make him feel a bit more appreciated."

The students also will send the troops brochures for the NCTA Combat Boots to Cowboy Boots program. This program is similar to NCTA's 100 Cow, 100 Acre, and Business Builder programs which help beginning farmers, ranchers and rural students get on a path to owning their own rural business or agriculture operation. Under the Combat Boots to Cowboy Boots program, veterans who enroll at NCTA are eligible for low interest loans. They also receive help developing a business plan with a partner.



NCTA graduate and Iraq War veteran Garret Dwyer met Willie Nelson as a spokesperson for the NCTA Combat Boots to Cowboy Boots program.

Helping to get the Combat Boots to Cowboy Boots program started is NCTA graduate and Iraq marine veteran Garret Dwyer. With his father as a partner, Dwyer used the NCTA 100 Cow Program to purchase 125 head of cattle last year.

About the NCTA care packages project Dwyer said, "There is nothing like showing your support to your local service members. I know from experience; it was very much appreciated when we received care packages from our local communities. "

Six other veterans currently attend NCTA out of an on-campus population of about 300 students. NCTA Dean Weldon Sleight says the campus will be able to grow to 600 students during the

next two years now that the college has started construction on its new Education Center and residence halls.

There are more than enough people in the armed forces to fill those residence halls. According to Dwyer, there are 2 million people currently serving in the armed forces, either actively or in reserve. In addition, forty-five percent of service members already come from rural towns.

Through the Combat Boots to Cowboy Boots program, NCTA hopes to entice more veterans to rural Nebraska.

Through the care packages project, the students might convince some of those veterans to attend NCTA.

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