

Heineman praises FFA; talks jobs, education

Written by Elizabeth Barrett
Thursday, 26 April 2012 14:04 -



Governor says HSUS against agriculture

Weaving FFA into a speech emphasizing jobs and education and blasting the Humane Society of the United States, Gov. Dave Heineman said the organization teaches and molds students into leaders.

Heineman spoke in the school's performing arts center in Gothenburg last Thursday, as part of the annual FFA banquet and awards ceremony.

Life skills are part of FFA, he said, and include honesty, integrity and teamwork.

The local chapter's greenhouse and sod farm help students learn successful entrepreneurship, Heineman said, which is important to Nebraskans.

Because agriculture is the state's No. 1 industry, he said the economy is in better shape than in most states.

"Our farmers and ranchers do an incredible job of feeding the state and world," Heineman said, noting that the future is bright.

"By 2050, there will be another two billion people to feed on less land.

"Demand will be high and supply low."

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Agriculture, he said, adds more than \$17 billion to the economy of the state, which is the nation's No. 2 producer of ethanol.

Heineman pointed to the Nebraska Advantage program, with its economic development incentives for business expansions and locations, and a balanced state budget as helping the state.

A 4% unemployment rate, the second lowest in the nation, makes other governors envious, he said.

Heineman said he wants to give every student the best in the 21st century, which means making schools better.

By attending smaller schools throughout Nebraska, the governor said he was involved in many activities, like FFA, that helped shape him into a more well-rounded person.

He also said the Humane Society of the United States doesn't appreciate agriculture, which is more than animal welfare.

"Agriculture is the American way of life and they want to destroy the American dream for ranchers and farmers," Heineman said.

Nebraskans will defeat any ballot initiative, concerning animal welfare practices, the organization tries to pass in the state, he said.

"We're not looking for a fight, but if they want one, they won't win," he said, noting that FFA needs to be part of the effort to protect the state from extremist groups through student knowledge of social media.

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In talking about small towns, Heineman said good jobs are available with affordable living, safety, an unmatched quality of life and a work ethic.

“We go to work everyday, we show up and work hard,” he said. “We learn the right, honest way to do things. Ethics still count.”

So does friendliness and hospitality.

Heineman said people he’s met through the Big Ten conference have told him that Nebraskans are the best people they’ve ever met.

In fact he said he heard about fans walking to a football game and being invited to join numerous tailgate parties along the way.

“That shows what kind of people we are with our values and ethics,” Heineman said.

One of these days, he said FFA’ers will be leading their communities, state and the nation.

“What you learn in FFA will help you prepare,” Heineman said.

Brennan Costello, the 2011-12 Nebraska FFA president and 2011 graduate of GHS, shared the significance of symbols on his FFA jacket.

“The FFA jacket means the entire organization so wear it with pride,” he said.

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Costello also told the students in the audience to take the opportunities FFA offers and to become involved, especially working toward a state degree.

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