



The SOWER

UNIVERSITY OF
Nebraska
Lincoln

FALL 2009

College of Agricultural Sciences and Natural Resources Alumni Association

Ita Committed to Serving Others and Agriculture

People come and go in our lives, but how many of them cause you to smile? Will your peers, family and acquaintances remember YOU to be the one with the infectious smile or someone always willing to help without being asked?

Thad Ita was that person. Sadly, Ita died in a car accident on May 30, 2009, along with his wife Tricia and son Jake. Ita grew up with four siblings on a ranch in Spalding, Neb.

Looking back, Ita's sister Polla Hartley described Ita as one who genuinely cared about his fellow man. She remembers her brother as one who would include those individuals standing away from the crowd.

Ita shared his loving, caring character as a student in the College of Agricultural Sciences and Natural Resources (CAS-NR). He was a bull rider for the rodeo team, was an officer in the University of

Nebraska-Lincoln Rodeo Association, and was involved with the horse judging team.

George Pfeiffer, the UNL Rodeo Association's adviser when Ita was a member, recalls Ita on their rodeo trip to Japan. "He made the trip nothing but fun. He enjoyed being in a different culture and they enjoyed him." Pfeiffer realized, as did many others who met Ita, that Ita possessed a joy of life.

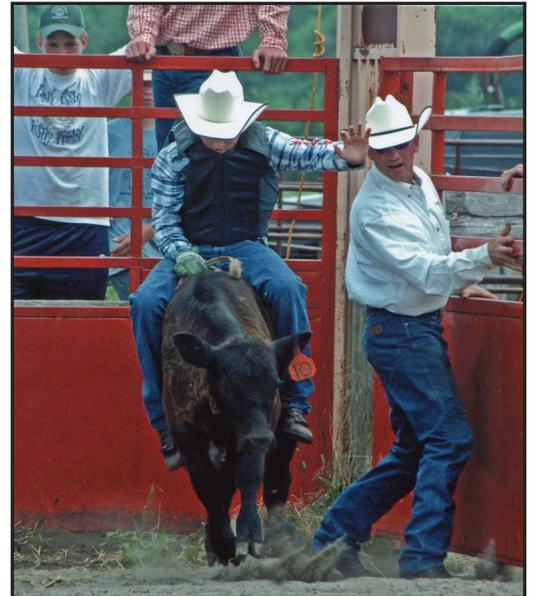
Von Svoboda grew up in the Spalding area and rode bulls with Ita while at UNL.

"Thad would always make time to stop by," Svoboda said. "The week he died he stopped by just to chat."

Svoboda said he would never forget Ita's giving heart. "Thad stopped by his neighbor's house to

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Thad Ita helps his son Jake during the 2006 Annual Kids Rodeo in Ericson, Neb. The Thad B. Ita Memorial Scholarship has been established in memory of Ita, Jake Ita, and wife Tricia, who died in a car accident May 30, 2009.

ACT Works Hard Telling Agriculture's Story



ACT members synchronize clocks before embarking on a scavenger hunt at the University of Nebraska-Lincoln East Campus prior to the club's first meeting of the school year.

Perhaps you always thought that the ACT was just for high school students. Think again. ACT is making an impact on students, but rather than coming in the form of a four-hour assessment, the ACT's impact at the University of Nebraska-Lincoln comes in the form of an organization called Agricultural Communicators of Tomorrow.

As an affiliate of an international organization, ACT at UNL provides its members with opportunities for professional development and networking. The club welcomes anyone with an interest in the promotion of agriculture, not just students in agricultural journalism.

"ACT gives members the opportunity to get a taste of the industry before graduation," said Lindsey Horner, a senior

agricultural journalism and animal science student. "I have not only gained leadership skills from the club, but have been able to network with my peers who share a passion for agricultural communications."

Reaching beyond East Campus, ACT provides students the opportunity to attend national conferences where they meet other students and industry professionals from across the nation. They also can have their work recognized and critiqued by agricultural communications

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The CASNR Family

A high level of personal attention is what makes the transition from high school or another college to the College of Agricultural Sciences and Natural Resources (CASNR) an easy one. Parents of new students often remark how easily their child has adapted to college life and how many student involvement opportunities are available and offered. We're not just talking about words in a guidebook, but about staff and faculty talking with new students, one on one, about student organizations, academic department clubs and other groups of students gathering weekly for a purpose.

At New Student Enrollment events parents, in addition to their students, are introduced to the wide variety of activities, opportunities and support services available. Parents quickly realize their new student has great opportunities to merge with the college society on this campus and become part of the CASNR family.

The CASNR CARES Program – Caring Attitudes and Respect for Every Student – provides a single contact for parents and students seeking assistance in navigating the university's student services programs. The goal is to ensure that each student becomes acclimated to the campus environment, engages in his or her own education and has every opportunity to be successful. It also serves as a resource for family, faculty and staff to identify students who may benefit from the assistance available, and initiate follow-up contact from appropriate staff. This college is committed to assisting every student in achieving personal and academic goals. The program has resulted in an average of more than 400 contacts per year during the last five years.

Numerous other programs and events serve to help new students adapt. The names of all new CASNR freshmen are entered into Blackboard, an electronic messaging and communications tool used throughout the university. Seven communications were sent to new students at home in the weeks



Duane Kristensen

leading up to the first day of classes, with messages talking about packing for college, events early in the semester and other items of interest to new students. Another five messages were sent in the first weeks of classes telling students about the Welcome Back Club Fair and the Amazing CASNR Race (scavenger hunt) at the Nebraska State Fair. These all lead to an introduction to the person writing the message, a situation of "no surprises" and a more comfortable transition for new students.

The CASNR Luau is the Friday before classes start. All new freshmen and their parents are invited for free food and games, and the opportunity to meet other students and parents. Big Red Welcome greets students on Sunday. Campus Guides are staff and faculty who welcome students at East Campus bus stops, help students find the buildings for their classes and hand out granola bars. The Welcome Back Club Fair is a place where student organizations have tables staffed with members providing information on the various clubs and information on how to join.

The Amazing CASNR Race, Prairie Stomp, Mid-Semester Check, College Fair for Undecided Students, CASNR Blood Drive and Homecoming Concert all are for the students, to welcome them back and to provide opportunities for them to meet other students. And these are only some of the events and activities that bring new students into the CASNR family, a sense of belonging to a caring community that exists not only throughout the college years but continues after graduation. As members of the CASNR Alumni Association I know we feel part of that family as well.

— *Duane Kristensen, President*

Your CASNR Alumni Association

The CASNR alumni board of directors represents a wide range of degree programs and professions in agriculture, natural resources and beyond. Remember that if you have comments, suggestions or ideas for your CASNR or its publication, call the CASNR Dean's Office at 1-800-742-8800, ext. 2541 and request the alumni development director.

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The Sower is produced by students in the Agricultural Communicators of Tomorrow, a CASNR club.

Paige Bek, *Coordinator*
 Assistant Professor Jason Ellis, *Adviser*

CASNR Alumni Association Presents Awards



Dr. James D. Pillen (pictured here with wife Suzanne and family) was honored last spring at the CASNR Week banquet with the CASNR Alumni Association Achievement Award. Pillen was raised on a farm near Monroe, Neb., graduated from CASNR in 1983, and continued on to Kansas State University where he obtained a Doctorate of Veterinary Medicine. He owned a veterinary clinic and is the founder of Progressive Swine Technologies in Columbus, Neb.



The Department of Animal Science received the first CASNR Alumni Association Award for Engagement of Emeriti Faculty at last spring's CASNR Week banquet. The department puts forth a great effort to recognize faculty when they receive awards and when they retire. The department also keeps past faculty informed about current activities and provides resources for them. Interim department head Sheila Scheideler accepted the award on behalf of the department.



The CASNR Alumni Association Service Award was presented to Dr. Martin Massengale (pictured with wife Ruth) at the CASNR Week banquet in spring 2009. Massengale became the Vice Chancellor for the Institute of Agriculture and Natural Resources in 1976, Chancellor of the Lincoln campus in 1981, and was President of the four-campus university from 1991 to 1994. He is known as a consensus builder and a progressive leader. He helped grow the Center for Grassland Studies by administering two new degree programs: Grazing Livestock Systems and PGA Golf Management.



Paul F. Engler (pictured here with l-r: IANR Vice Chancellor John Owens; CASNR NRAA President Duane Kristensen; Engler; and CASNR Dean Steve Waller) received the Henry Beachell Distinguished Alumni Award from the CASNR Alumni Association on Sept. 10. Engler, a native of Stuart, Neb., became involved in the cattle industry at age 13 with his first cattle purchase. Engler started Cactus Feeders, which now is the largest privately owned cattle-feeding company in the world. He is active in the Texas Cattle Feeders Association and has served as a member of the Cattlemen's Beef Board, appointed by the U.S. Department of Agriculture.



The Brown family was honored with the 2009 CASNR Alumni Association Legacy Award. They have been involved with the Nebraska Rural Radio Association for more than a half century. Max Brown helped put KRVN on the air. He served as the executive secretary for the association and general manager of the station until he retired in 1979. Eric Brown (pictured here) continued his father's legacy and currently serves as the KRVN general manager. The Brown family has helped CASNR and IANR advance agriculture through effective broadcast communication.



**College of Agricultural Sciences and
Natural Resources Alumni Association
University of Nebraska–Lincoln
Constituent Contribution Form**

Name _____
 Spouse's name _____ (if applicable)
 Address _____
 City _____ State _____
 Zip _____
 Home Phone _____
 Work Phone _____
 E-mail Address _____
 CASNR Class _____ Major _____
 Spouse Class _____ Major _____
Type of Constituent New Renewal
 \$20 Annual individual
 \$25 Annual couple
 Sustaining (more than basic fee)
 Amount: _____

Life Affiliation
 \$300 Individual
 \$360 Couple
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Corporate Partnership
 \$1,000 Legacy
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 phorton2@unl.edu)

Affiliation is open to alumni and friends of the college.

Payment
 Please make your check payable to “NU Foundation” and send this form to:

CASNRAA
P.O. Box 830702
103 Ag Hall
LINCOLN NE 68583-0702

Alumni Can Renew Online

Make an annual contribution, change affiliate status or make a contribution in the name of another with the Association online and pay by credit card. If you prefer this method, go to <http://casnr.unl.edu> and select “Alumni, Friends, Donors, Extension” for options to either pay by check or pay by credit card. The annual contribution is only \$20.

**Silent Auction Provides
5 Scholarships for
Incoming Students**

Every year the College of Agricultural Sciences and Natural Resources (CASNR) awards numerous scholarships to incoming students, some of them being CASNR Alumni Association Recruitment Scholarships. In fall 2008 the CASNR Alumni Association silent auction raised \$5,957 to support scholarships, allowing CASNR to award five incoming freshmen a \$1,000 scholarship each. The recipients are Angela DeOllos from Hallam, Neb., Virginia Noyes from Kearney, Neb., and Andrea Pfeffer from York, Neb., all studying pre-veterinary science; Brandon Essink from Syracuse, Neb., studying agribusiness; and Julia Kreikemeier from Dodge, Neb., a biochemistry student.

— Erica Jobman

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professionals through the National ACT Critique and Contest.

Members further advance their expertise through developmental projects and fundraisers, such as taking pictures at the State FFA Career Development Event awards ceremony, working at the Nebraska Farm Bureau’s Ag in the Classroom booth at the Nebraska State Fair, and writing articles for this very publication – The Sower.

Through such experiences and social activities, members of ACT develop close friendships.

“My favorite part about ACT is the diverse and amazing group of people involved,” Horner commented. “We all come from different backgrounds, but are linked together by a common goal of wanting to communicate about agriculture.”

Paige Bek, a senior in agricultural journalism and agricultural economics summed it up best. “The message you share should have a lasting effect on future generations.” For ACT, the message is agriculture. There is no better reason to take the ACT again.

— Jill Petersen

The University of Nebraska–Lincoln does not discriminate based on gender, age, disability, race, color, religion, marital status, veteran’s status, national or ethnic origin, or sexual orientation.

**2009 CASNRAA Auction
At-A-Glance**

- 125 participants – up from 100 in 2008
- 44 auction items – list grows each year
- \$5000 raised for scholarships
- Five, \$1,000–scholarships will be awarded next spring
- 80 tickets for the Arkansas State game were available to members
- Two alumni awards were presented:
 Henry Beachell Distinguished Alumni Award to Paul Engler
 CASNR Alumni Association Legacy Award to Eric Brown and the Brown family

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see how the concrete pouring was going. He didn’t miss a beat; he rolled up his sleeves and began to help out, no questions asked,” Svoboda recalled.

Sheila O’Connor knew Ita well, even prior to serving together on the CASNR Alumni Association Board, and was one of the first to contribute to the Thad B. Ita Memorial Scholarship Fund.

“What a humbling way to honor our CASNR family and Thad’s contributions to CASNR and the CASNR Alumni Association,” said O’Connor. It’s a true ‘pay it forward’ opportunity.”

Ita was an example of how wonderful character, a willingness to work hard, and taking time to help your fellow man can touch numerous lives. To learn more about ways you can contribute to the Thad B. Ita Memorial Scholarship, contact Paul Horton at the CASNR Alumni Association: (402) 472-3936 or phorton2@unl.edu.

— Paige Bek

CASNRAA

Web site: <http://casnr.unl.edu/alumni>