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NEWS RELEASE
Feb. 17, 2005

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Statehood Day dinner on March 5 to honor four

LINCOLN – The NEBRASKAland Foundation will honor four Nebraskans with achievement awards at the Statehood Day dinner March 5 at the State Capitol.

The foundation will present Nancy Hoch of Nebraska City with the Pioneer Award, Ralph Holzfaster of Paxton with the Wagonmaster Award, Bryce Neidig of Madison with the Trailblazer Award and Father Val Peter of Boys Town with the Distinguished NEBRASKAlander Award.

The formal-attire event starts with a 6 p.m. reception, followed by the dinner at 7 p.m. in the rotunda. Tickets for the dinner cost \$100 each and can be purchased by calling the foundation at (402) 483-2747. The dinner will celebrate Nebraska's 138th anniversary of statehood.

Hoch is noted for her involvement in improving the economy and quality of life in her community, historic preservation efforts and politics.

She served as president of the River Country Economic Development Corporation in Nebraska City for 16 years before retiring at the end of 2004. She also has been active in the community in library and social services, the arts and housing.

Hoch has been involved in historic preservation on the local, state and national levels. She helped spearhead the construction of the new Lewis and Clark visitors center in Nebraska City and serves as the center's interim director.

In the political arena, she served on the University of Nebraska Board of Regents for 12 years and ran as a candidate for governor and the U.S. Senate.

Holzfaster has been a leader in agribusiness, value-added agriculture and public power.

As a leading advocate of economic development in Nebraska, he has helped lead the expansion of ethanol and worked to promote alternative crops. His business interests include operation of a farm and a center-pivot irrigation dealership.

Holfaster served on the Nebraska Public Power District board for 24 years. He also has served on the Paxton Consolidated school board, Governor's Platte River Advisory Council, Mid Plains College Foundation board, West Nebraska Development Foundation board and Keith County Economic Development Corporation board.

Neidig has left his mark on the agricultural scene in Nebraska and on the national level.

Neidig, who operates a farm near Madison, had a long association with the Nebraska Farm Bureau, the state's largest farm organization. He joined the Nebraska Farm Bureau board in 1975 and then went on to serve as the organization's president from 1981 until his retirement in 2002.

On the national level, he served on the American Farm Bureau board and U.S. Meat Export Federation board. He has traveled on a number of foreign trade missions with Nebraska governors and the American Farm Bureau.

Neidig also has served on the Governor's Agricultural Advisory Council, Nebraska Capitol Commission, Nebraska State Fair Foundation board, and Nebraska Blue Cross and Blue Shield board.

Peter is the noted executive director of Girls and Boys Town, a leader in providing care and services to at-risk children and families.

He has served as executive director since 1985. He has led the growth of the organization from its Nebraska roots to an organization that has 19 sites in 14 states and the District of Columbia. The organization serves countless numbers of children and families through its direct-care programs, National Crisis Hotline, and outreach and training programs.

Peter, a longtime educator, holds doctorate degrees in canon law and theology, and is the author of numerous books and scholarly articles.

The NEBRASKAland Foundation, which was founded in 1962, sponsors numerous activities and programs throughout the year as part of its mission to promote Nebraska and the state's "good life."

Nebraska Secretary of State John Gale serves on the foundation's board and helps host the dinner. Scott Moore of Omaha, Gale's predecessor, is the foundation's president.