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## **Natural Resources Districts (NRDs) Raise Nearly \$24,000 for Youth Natural Resources Education and Honor Award Winners**

(Kearney, NE) – The 2018 Nebraska Association of Resources Districts (NARD) Annual Conference was held at the Younes Conference Center in Kearney, September 24<sup>th</sup> – 25<sup>th</sup> and focused on protecting lives, property and the future of Nebraska’s natural resources. This year more than 400 natural resources districts (NRD) managers, staff, board members, conservation partners and the public received new information on many natural resources and agriculture developments and projects going on now.

Participants had a variety of educational break-out sessions to choose from. Sessions focused on water scarcity, overall water management, soil health, groundwater plans and water quality successes in Nebraska. Other events included recognition of Hall of Fame inductees, conservation award winners, master conservationist awards and a speech by Lieutenant Governor Mike Foley.

The **Nebraska Association of Resources Districts Foundation** which provides financial assistance to youth programs in natural resources and agriculture, raised nearly **\$24,000** this year during its live and silent auctions, golf and shootout fundraisers. These funds will assist in supporting more than 11 different educational programs in Nebraska to encourage children and young adults to learn more about our natural resources and consider a career in natural resources.

During the Hall of Fame ceremony, three individuals were inducted into the Natural Resources Hall of Fame. They include Keith Rexroth from Sidney, Nebraska. Ron Milner from Imperial, Nebraska, and Don McCabe who grew up near Newcastle and currently resides in Lincoln, Nebraska. This is the NRDs’ 46<sup>th</sup> Anniversary.

**Hall of Fame inductee categories include:** Natural Resources District Board Member, Natural Resources District Employee and NRD Supporter which includes individuals outside the NRD system.

- Hall of Fame inductee **Keith Rexroth from Sidney, Nebraska**, was nominated for the Hall of Fame Natural Resources Districts Board member award by the South Platte Natural Resources District. Rexroth spent 24 years as a member of the South Platte Natural Resources District (SPNRD) Board of Directors, 16 of those as Chairman. One of his major achievements during those years was his commitment and input into developing an Integrated Management Plan (IMP) which will help protect water resources into the future. He’s received numerous awards including the 1983 Outstanding Young Farmer Nebraska award, 2005 NRD Director of the Year award and 2013 University of Nebraska-Lincoln Panhandle Research and Extension Center

Outstanding Service to Panhandle Agriculture award. Rexroth received an appointment by the governor as an advisor for the Three-State Cooperative Agreement on the Platte River, has been a member of the High Plains Ag Lab Advisory board since 1973, was a board member for the USDA Agricultural Research Service station in Akron, Colorado and has spent countless hours volunteering his time to youth education as well.

- Hall of Fame inductee, Ron Milner posthumously was nominated for the Hall of Fame NRD Staff category by the Upper Republican Natural Resources District. His wife resides in Imperial, Nebraska. Milner served as the first general manager of the Upper Republican Natural Resources District (URNRD) from 1972 to 1997. He helped pass the Groundwater Management Act in 1976 and with Milner's guidance, the URNRD board adopted an order that required metering and reporting of groundwater use, making the NRD the first in the state to do so in 1978. Metering was done so that Milner and the NRD would be able to see how much water was being used and to make sure that irrigators were not going over their newly allotted allocation. There was great opposition to the metering, but Milner knew it was the right decision to make and it would be beneficial to the conservation of groundwater. He created the first Groundwater Management Area in the state and enacted well spacing rules as well.
- Hall of Fame inductee, Don McCabe, was nominated by the Central Platte Natural Resources District to be inducted into the Hall of Fame as a Natural Resources Districts Supporter. McCabe grew up on a farm near Newcastle, Nebraska. He currently resides in Lincoln. He worked for the Nebraska Farmer magazine for 37 years and was instrumental in helping farmers in Nebraska learn about how to implement conservation practices to protect Nebraska's soil and water. He earned a journalism degree from the University of Nebraska and served in the U.S. Navy for four years. McCabe covered natural resources issues that needed to be addressed through Groundwater Management Plans, to new techniques and technologies available to help farmers address production and natural resources issues. He's key in helping lower nitrate levels in the Central Platte Natural Resources District due to his articles focusing on conservation efforts to achieve such a goal.

**Nebraska Association of Resources Districts Conservation award winners include (*We have information on each award winner if you'd like more*):**

- Director of the Year – Don Kavan of Morse Bluff, NE  
Nominated by Lower Platte North NRD
- Educator of the Year – Philip Simpson with Burwell Junior/Senior High School  
Nominated by Lower Loup NRD
- Tree Planter of the Year Award - Jerry Fullerton of Cody, NE  
Nominated by Middle Niobrara NRD
- Outstanding Grassland Conservation Award - The Mathewson Family of Potter, NE  
Nominated by South Platte NRD
- Outstanding Soil Stewardship Conservation Award - Scott and Barbara Gonnerman of Waco, NE  
Nominated by Upper Big Blue NRD
- Outstanding Community Conservation Award - Dan Kathol of Hartington, NE

Nominated by Lewis and Clark NRD

***Omaha World-Herald* and IANR Master Conservationist Award Winners include:**

- Agriculture – Scott and Barbara Gonnerman of Waco, NE  
Nominated by Upper Big Blue NRD
- Education – Shell Creek Watershed Monitoring Program in Newman Grove High School  
Nominated by Lower Platte North NRD

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The Nebraska Association of Resources Districts (NARD), the trade association for Nebraska's 23 natural resources districts, works with individual NRDs to protect lives, protect property, and protect the future of Nebraska's natural resources. These districts are unique to Nebraska. NRD's are local government entities with broad responsibilities to protect our natural resources. Major Nebraska river basins form the boundaries of the 23 NRDs, enabling districts to respond best to local conservation and resource management needs. To learn more about Nebraska's NRDs visit [www.nrdnet.org](http://www.nrdnet.org). Or you can head to the Natural Resources Districts' Facebook page at [www.facebook.com](http://www.facebook.com) or follow NARD's Twitter page at [@nebraskanrds](http://www.twitter.com). NARD is located at 6601 S. 12<sup>th</sup> St. Suite 201, Lincoln, Nebraska 68508. Email NARD at [nard@nrdnet.org](mailto:nard@nrdnet.org) or call NARD at (402) 471-7670.