Written by Wauneta Breeze
Thursday, 10 November 2011 15:51 -

The University of Nebraska-Lincoln Extension will begin its fourth Farm Beginnings® Program at the First National Bank (basement meeting room) in Syracuse on December 10th. As part of a USDA Farmer and Rancher Grant, the University of Nebraska-Lincoln Extension is facilitating the Farm Beginnings® Program to be held in Syracuse. The Farm Beginnings® Program is an educational training and support program designed to help people who want to evaluate and plan their farm enterprise. Farm Beginnings® participants engage in a mentorship experience and network with a variety of successful, innovative farmers; attend practical, high quality seminars, field days and conferences. The program is unique in that several successful farmers participate in the program as presenters, explaining firsthand the nuts and bolts of their farming operation. While any beginning farmer would benefit from attending these training sessions, most of the farmers that present come from small to medium sized farming operations that produce and market many different diversified and value-added products. Many of these farmers direct market their products.

The Farm Beginnings® Program consists of a series of 10 sessions from December to April that cover a variety of topics including: building networks, goal setting, whole farm planning, building your business plan, marketing, business and farm management and financial management. While the class participants will learn firsthand from the farmers, they will also work on developing their own business plan as they progress through the course. As part of the class tuition, participants will also have the opportunity to attend the Rural Advantage/Healthy Farms Conference at the Lied Lodge in Nebraska City on February 10th and 11th. This is a conference that has been held annually for a number of years and has sessions that focus on topics such as: vegetable production, grass-fed beef, cover crops, organic farming, bee keeping, farm transitioning and agri-tourism. We also have a farm tour in December and tour several farms in the summer to see how the farmers are operating. If interested, participants also have the opportunity to have a farmer mentor.

Cost of the total program is $500, but you may qualify for a partial scholarship. For a brochure and an application for the Farm Beginnings® Program go to http://nemaha.unl.edu and scroll down to the Farm Beginnings® article. For more information about the program contact Gary Lesoing, Extension Educator at glesoing2@unl.edu or at (402) 274-4755, University of Nebraska-Lincoln Extension in Nemaha County.