


THE CAPITOL SOWER

THE NEWSLETTER OF THE CAPITOL COMMISSION | VOLUME EIGHTEEN | NUMBER ONE | MAY 2026

HVAC Phase 5 Update

While the Heating Ventilation and Air Conditioning (HVAC) Replacement and Window Repair Project continues in the tower, staff in the base of the Nebraska State Capitol are adjusting to the new system. Each office now has its own thermostat. The thermostats are uniform in design but not all functions are activated for all systems. The buttons on the thermostat, pictured below, operate the system. The display shows how the system is operating. The temperature (TEMP) moves up or down



by touching the arrows. The MODE button cycles through the following settings, COOL, HEAT, AUTO, FAN, DRYING, and SETBACK. Office of the Capitol Commission maintenance recommends office staff set the desired room TEMP, set the MODE to AUTO, and let the unit do the work. On AUTO the thermostat maintains a temperature range of four degrees: two degrees above and two degrees below the TEMP setting. If the temperature rises above the TEMP setting, the system sends cool air into the room; if the temperature goes below, the system sends warm air into the room. Consideration should be given to this fluctuation when setting the TEMP. Office of the Capitol Commission staff are available to answer questions or concerns about the system. 



Nebraska Capitol Commission Membership

Jim Pillen
Governor, Chairman

John Arch
Speaker of the Legislature
Vice-Chairman

Jeffrey J. Funke
Chief Justice Supreme Court

Kevin Van Den Wymelenberg
Dean
College of Architecture, UNL

Daryl Bohac
CEO/Executive Director
Nebraska State Historical Society

Doug Carey
Congressional District 1


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Congressional District 2

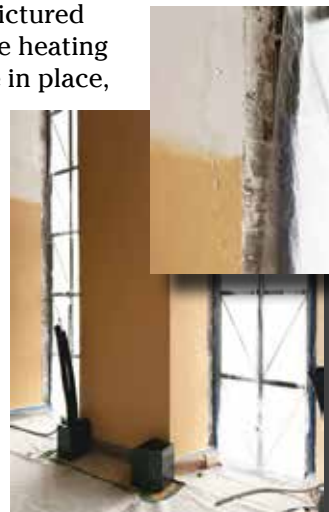
Katie Spohn
Congressional District 3

Brett Daugherty
Acting Administrator
Secretary



Work in the Capitol's tower offices continues. Where needed, the plaster covering the steel support beams is being repaired, pictured left. Installation of the equipment associated with the recirculating refrigerant is beginning to appear in the lower floors of the tower. Pictured below, mounts for the heating and cooling units are in place, and the pipes that will circulate the

refrigerant are ready for final installation of the new units. The units will sit in front of the walls between the floor to ceiling ribbon windows. Offices in the tower will be transformed once the windows are uncovered to allow a full view. An additional component of the HVAC project is window repair. Contractors removed water damaged plaster along the ribbon windows, see inset right, and will repair the plaster once the window contractors lower themselves on a swing stage anchored at the 14th floor level and seal the windows on the exterior to prevent water infiltration in the future. 



The People of the
OCC
 Office of the Capitol
 Commission

OCC AT WORK

Experience and Service

OCC Welcomes New Staff

ADMINISTRATION

Vacant, Administrator
 Matt Hansen, Preservation Architect
 Vacant, Preservation Architect
 Brett Daugherty, Capitol Manager
 Acting Administrator
 Tammy Honnor, Facilities
 Construction Coordinator
 Sarah Lacey,
 Administrative Technician

ARCHIVE

Karen Wagner, Archivist

CARPENTRY

Vacant, Shop Supervisor
 Lana Gabel,
 Furniture Conservator
 Dawn Snider,
 Furniture Conservation
 Supervisor
 Hunter VonHolt, Carpenter
 Dan Kratky, Mason
 John MacKichan,
 Hardware Conservator
 Mike Marshall, Cabinet Maker
 Carpentry Supervisor

CUSTODIAL

David Hoelscher,
 Capitol Conservation Supervisor
 Richard Mallam, Custodial Leader
 LaShawn Williams, Custodial
 Leader

GROUNDS

Heather Dinslage,
 Groundskeeper Leader
 Aud Koch, Maintenance Technician
 Lexis Funk,
 Maintenance Technician

MAINTENANCE

Chris Lahmon, Maintenance
 Supervisor
 Jeff Gillett, Plumber
 Steve Layton, Electrician
 Bret Pinkelman,
 Maintenance Technician
 Teran Kemp, Maintenance
 Technician

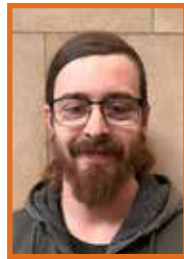
TOURS

Roxanne Smith,
 Public Information Officer/
 Tourism Supervisor/
 Special Events Coordinator
 Andrew Kosmicki, Tourism Aide
 Susan Myers, Tourism Aide
 Kirk Woita, Tourism Aide

The Capitol Custodial and Maintenance teams welcomed new staff in 2025. Two new staff members have joined the team maintaining and caring for the Nebraska State Capitol. LaShawn Williams joined the custodial team in the position of day custodial leader. Teran Kehm was hired to fill the vacancy when Chris Lahmon was promoted to Maintenance Supervisor. 🏠



Chris Lahmon has worked for the State of Nebraska for almost 20 years. He spent 11 years with Nebraska Corrections, working in facility maintenance before coming to the Office of the Capitol Commission. During his 8 years with OCC he learned to apply his maintenance skills with a preservation focus preparing him for his new role as Maintenance Supervisor. A native of Lincoln, Chris enjoys playing with his dogs and riding his motorcycle.



Teran Kehm is a native Lincolnite who worked in construction and mechanical trades before coming to the Capitol. He likes working on mechanical equipment and is learning the tasks of the OCC's maintenance team. When

not working at the Capitol he enjoys remote control cars and fishing.



LaShawn Williams is originally from Chicago, but has called Nebraska home for the past 10 years. She worked for the Capitol's contract custodians for 3 years. When a position on OCC's team opened,

she applied and was chosen. OCC is happy to have her on the team.

OCC staff receiving years of service recognition include Kirk Woita and Susan Myers for 5 years, Lana Gabel for 10 years, and Matt Hansen for 15 years. Richard Mallam, Custodial Leader was recognized



by Lt. Governor Kelly for 25 years of service. Mallam is responsible for the team caring for the Capitol's marble, slate, linoleum, and

granolith floors. He has personally transformed the figurative mosaics and brought back their original beauty.

The Capitol Tour Office is pleased to welcome a new member to the team. Andrew Kosmicki, a native of Ogallala, will work the weekend tour schedule.



He brings years of teaching experience and an interest in art and art history to the position. He enjoys camping and bike riding. 🏠

Commission's 2026 Schedule

The Nebraska Capitol Commission will hold their meetings in Hearing Room #1507 on the ground floor of the Capitol. The Commission uses these meetings to oversee and review Capitol maintenance and preservation projects, discuss and approve projects and the upcoming budget for the Office of the Capitol Commission, and set administrative rules for the use of the Capitol. The


last meeting of the year includes a joint Capitol Commission/Capitol Environs Commission meeting. These meetings are open to the public. 🏠

- May 26, 2026, at 10:00 a.m.
- November 12, 2026,
 Joint Meeting at 10:00 a.m.
 Capitol Commission at 11:00 a.m.

CONSERVATION PROJECTS

Restoration Saves Money

Taking care of the Nebraska State Capitol and those who use the Capitol, visitors and staff, is one of the Office of the Capitol Commission's responsibilities. One way the Office of the Capitol Commission (OCC) has accomplished this is to close the North Plaza and promenade decks during winter. These areas become icy and unsafe when temperatures drop. As the sun shines on the Capitol, thawing and refreezing surfaces over and over, any attempt to keep the promenade deck or north plaza open would be futile, and damaging to the Capitol. For years staff put up oversized sawhorses to block the way, but some people would disregard the closed signs and go

around. To discourage this dangerous behavior OCC carpenters built larger more sturdy panels which more effectively block the stairs. Matching a window detail on the Capitol, OCC carpenter staff used clear cedar to manufacture the barricades. For added durability, staff used mortise and tenon construction, with a strong joint design and no no metal fasteners. After years of service the barricades were showing their age. Rather than start over and build new, staff took a preservation and restoration approach. Refurbishing the existing barricades ultimately saved taxpayer's money because the price of clear cedar had doubled and repair took less staff time. 



Left, the weathered barricades arrive in OCC Carpenter's Shop. The first step in the refurbishing process was to address cracks in the wood. Some cracks were stabilized with glue, above. Right, if the barricade was too weather damaged, deteriorated material was removed and replaced with new wood.



After repairs were made, the barricades were sanded to reveal a clean smooth surface and then stained and finish applied, left, to preserve the wood.

In addition to refurbishing the barricades, staff worked to improve the finish on the 'CLOSED' signs. Right, the paint on the signs was damaged and the finish was uneven.



Staff carefully removed the original paint from the etched letters, below left. Once the signs were cleaned, they were repainted with a more durable paint. Once the paint had cured, staff polished the signs to remove the paint on the surface, right, making the signs more readable.



The refurbished barricade at the east entrance to the promenade deck, above, keeps visitors safe and looks good doing it.

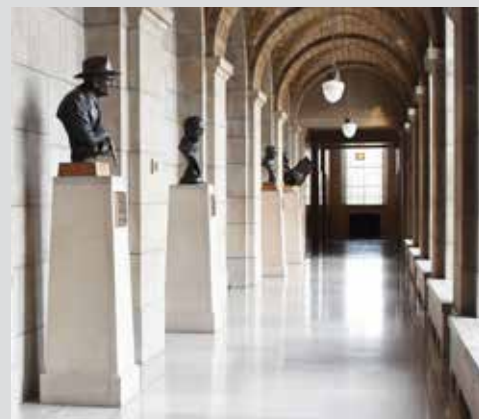
Nebraska's Hall of Fame

Since the Nebraska Hall of Fame was established by an act of the Nebraska Legislature in 1961, the Nebraska State Capitol has been home to the busts recognizing prominent Nebraskans. Capitol architect Bertram Goodhue designed the Capitol's Great Hall with six niches, three on either side. These niches held the first members of the Hall of Fame. After the first six busts filled the niches, additional busts were placed on pedestals in the galleries surrounding the rotunda and overlooking the courtyards. Through the years, the busts have been moved out of chronological order of induction to highlight new members and favorites.

Since its creation in 1961, bust, pedestal and plaque styles have varied. To ensure uniformity and continuity of design, the Hall of Fame Commission created bust, pedestal, and plaque standards. As time allows, the Office of the Capitol Commission is working to mount previous inductees' busts on the updated pedestals and add updated plaques. In addition, the Hall of Fame members are being moved into chronological order. Given the care needed to protect the bronze busts during the transition, and the weight of the limestone pedestals, staff have been working slowly and carefully toward their goal.



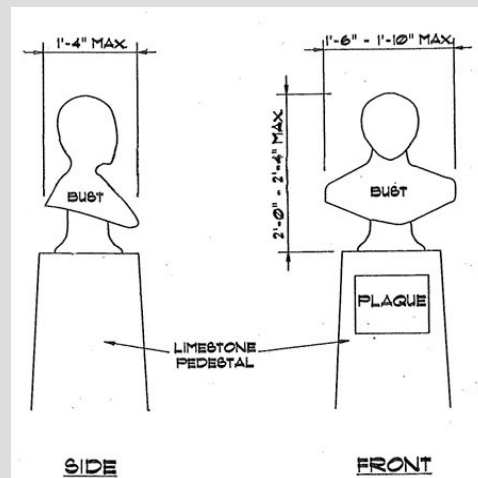
Once the six niches in the Great Hall were filled, the next inductee busts were placed on large pedestals in the northwest rotunda gallery, left. Large bronze plaques identify each member.



The updated pedestals and smaller plaques present a more refined image in the southeast gallery, right. The information presented on the larger plaques was reconfigured to fit the smaller format.

The bust of George W. Norris, sculpted by Jo Davidson in 1942, was commissioned as a thank you gift to acknowledge Norris' support for legislation which helped bring the United States out of the Great Depression. When Norris was inducted as the first member of the Hall of Fame in 1961, his bust was added to the Great Hall. The most recent inductee was Malcolm X. His bust was sculpted by Nebraska sculptor, Nathan Murray. Pictured below left and right, the busts are very different.

In the 65 years since the Hall of Fame was created, the size and style of the busts have varied. To create more uniformity and to scale the busts to the updated pedestal design, a maximum size standard was created. The sketch below will provide guidance for artists in the future.




BEHIND THE SCENES

Adding Busts in the Capitol

Adding the bust of a newly inducted Hall of Fame member is a lengthy process. After the Hall of Fame Commission chooses a new member, the bust must be commissioned, the limestone pedestal ordered and assembled, and the bronze plaque created. During the creation of the bust, staff determines the coming location of the bust. With the addition of Malcolm X in 2023, all easily identifiable spaces for members were filled. Discussion of where to place future members of the Hall of Fame within the Capitol is ongoing.

As the Office of the Capitol Commission is working to improve the appearance and function

of the Hall of Fame by correcting the chronology and updating the plaques in the Great Hall, staff is also cleaning the areas within the Hall of Fame. In the first step of the process, busts and old pedestals were removed from the Great Hall. The next step was cleaning the niches where the busts were displayed and the careful cleaning of the busts while they were stored in the Carpenter Shop. The new pedestals were sized to the niches and new plaques mounted. Once everything was ready the busts were reinstalled in their proper chronological order. 



Left, after the busts were taken to the shop for cleaning and storage, staff removed the pedestals from the niches. Special rigging was created by staff to lift and move the 1000 pound blocks of Indiana limestone.



Above, whenever possible staff cleans the limestone in the Capitol using the latex poultice which is painted on, left, allowed to cure, center, and right, once removed staff wipes off the residual detergent.



The original limestone block pedestals supporting the Hall of Fame busts in the Great Hall were replaced because the new standardized plaques were smaller and the voids behind the square blocks needed to be filled. Using the same method as with removal, left, but in reverse order staff lifted and moved the pedestals in place.



The cleaned limestone in the Hall of Fame provides an opportunity to see the space differently. Left, the installation of the new limestone block and the cleaned section below create the illusion of a pedestal to hold the bust. The new limestone block blends in with the cleaned bay, below right. The contrast between the new block on the left and the uncleaned bay is noticeable.



Once the pedestal was installed, staff set the cleaned bust back in place. The busts were secured onto the pedestals with hardware to prevent movement. The final step was to place the front of the pedestal with the new plaque attached in place. This process was repeated six times in the Great Hall.




WHAT'S OLD IS NEW

Color was used very deliberately in the Nebraska State Capitol. Capitol architect Bertram Goodhue chose different grades of Indiana Limestone for the Capitol's facade based on their color or ability to reflect light. The coarser stone, appearing darker, was chosen to give the base visual weight. The finest grained limestone was chosen to shine brightly and emphasize the rising tower. Interior colors in the floor and ceiling mosaics were deliberately chosen for symbolic reasons. Black and white floor mosaics allegorically represent the natural world; primary colored ceiling mosaics represent specific activities of Nebraska's people.

The designers not only considered color in the highly finished public areas, but also specified the colors used in offices and corridors. Since the 1932 completion of the Capitol, the plaster walls of offices and corridors were repainted with little regard for the original color scheme. As Office of the Capitol Commission (OCC) staff undertake renovation and restoration projects, they often uncover layers of paint. Staff use multiple resources, including those found in the Capitol Archives to verify which of the layers of paint are the original colors.

The Archives hold original paint specifications and historic photographs of public and office

spaces. Unfortunately some of the photos are black and white, requiring further investigation. Historic photos of the Fifth Floor of the Capitol, intended to illuminate the rotunda drum and dome, show a dark color behind the columns. At one point, before the construction of the State Office Building relieved Capitol overcrowding, the space was used by accounting staff and painted an office friendly lighter color.

The 2014 Elevator Upgrade Project included the removal of the 1980 lighted bar floor indicators and the replication of the original bronze elevator floor dials. The replacment of the dials required restoration of the walls in the elevator vestibules on all floors. Capitol preservation staff relied on a conservator to carefully remove paint layers to uncover original elevator vestibule colors. On fifth floor, using black and white photos for reference, staff sought the original dark color. Once the dark color was uncovered, paint samples supplied by a paint manufacturer were used to match the color. The demolition and construction associated with the current HVAC project will allow the entire 5th floor to be painted the original color. Staff and visitors will once again experience the rotunda as the architect intended. 

The 2014 Elevator Upgrade project included restoring tower elevator vestibules. Researching documents in the Archive, and reviewing photographs taken by Samuel H. Gottscho in 1932 and in the Library of Congress collection, OCC Preservation Architects determined they needed to bring in a specialist to carefully remove the many layers of paint on the 5th floor walls. Several colors were revealed before the original dark paint color, below left, was seen. Once the elevator work was complete, the elevator vestibule walls were painted the newly matched original color, below right.



Library of Congress,
Prints and Photographs Division
Gottscho-Schleisner Collection



The two black and white photos above, show the 5th floor as it appeared upon Capitol completion in 1932. The photos below are recent views of the 5th floor. The photo on the left, when compared to the same view above, shows how the darker color behind the columns expands the dome into the rotunda drum. The light color behind the drum reduces the visual impact of the dome and dome as a unit. The restored paint scheme will enhance the space.



CAPITOL EVENTS

Memorial Day
May 25, 2026

Capitol tours 10:00 a.m. - 5:00 p.m.

International Year of Rangeland and Pastoralist
Display June 1 - 12, 2026

The Nebraska Section of the Society for Range
Management will have a display in the first floor
rotunda.

Cornhusker Girls State
June 4, 2026 at 2:00 p.m.

The American Legion Auxiliary will hold the Girls
State Inauguration ceremony in the second floor
rotunda.

Cornhusker Boys State
June 5, 2026 at 10:00 a.m.

The American Legion will gather the Boys
State attendees in the second floor rotunda for
swearing in of elected leaders.

Star City PRIDE Parade
June 13, 2026 at 10:00 a.m.

Star City PRIDE will use the streets around the
Capitol for their annual PRIDE Parade.

Ride for America-Nebraska 250 Flag Escort
June 14, 2026 at 4:00 p.m.

The American Legion, Department of Nebraska
will hold a flag presentation in the second floor
rotunda is the Capitol.

Camp 73 Graduation
June 18, 2026 at 10:00 a.m.

The Nebraska State Patrol will hold the Camp 73
graduation ceremony in the second floor rotunda.

Juneteenth Holiday
June 19, 2026

Capitol tours 10:00 a.m. - 5:00 p.m.

My Nebraska, Our America: Art Display
July 1 - 31, 2026

The Nebraska Arts Council will display student
art as part of the Semiquincentennial celebration
in the first floor rotunda.

Independence Day
July 4, 2026

Capitol tours from 10:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m.

Public Reading of Declaration of Independence
July 8, 2026 at 4:30 p.m.

The Nebraska Society of the Sons of the
American Revolution will have a brief program
on the north plaza of the Capitol and then at 5:00
p.m. participate in a synchronized nationwide
reading of the Declaration of Independence.

Korean War Veterans Armistice Day
July 24, 2026 at 1:00 p.m.

The Nebraska Department of Veterans Affairs will
honor veterans of the Korean War in a second
floor rotunda ceremony.

Enable Savings Display
August 10 - 21, 2026

The Nebraska Treasurer's Office will have a
display about the Enable Savings Plan in the first
floor rotunda.

Fentanyl Awareness Day
August 21, 2026

The United States Drug Enforcement Agency will
sponsor an evening tower lighting with purple
light for Fentanyl Awareness and Prevention.

NU Presidential State of the University Address
September 3, 2026 at noon

The Office of the President of the University of
Nebraska System will present the State of the
University Address in the second floor rotunda.

Labor Day Holiday
September 7, 2026

The Capitol will be open for tours from 10:00
a.m. to 5:00 p.m.

Every Child Matters Awareness
September 30, 2026 at 11:00 a.m.

The Ponca Tribe of Nebraska will hold an
awareness walk around the Capitol.

New Attorney Swearing-In Ceremony
October 1, 2026 at 1:30 p.m.

The Nebraska Supreme Court will swear-in new
attorneys in the second floor rotunda.

World PANS PANDAS Awareness Day
October 9, 2026

The tower of the Capitol will be lit green in the
evening to draw attention to Pediatric Acute-
onset Neuropsychiatric Syndrome and Pediatric
Autoimmune Neuropsychiatric Disorder
Associated with Streptococcal Infections.

Indigenous Peoples/Columbus Day Holiday
October 12, 2026

The Capitol will be open for tours from 10:00
a.m. to 5:00 p.m.

Teammate Recognition

October 15, 2026 at 10:00 a.m. and 1:30 p.m.
The Department of Administrative Services will
honor teammates for their years of service to
the State of Nebraska in a second floor rotunda
ceremony

Legacy of Light: Diwali Cultural Showcase
October 19, 2026 at noon

The Telugu Samiti of Nebraska will celebrate
Diwali in the second floor rotunda.

New Probation Officer Swearing-in Ceremony
October 22, 2026 at 1:30 p.m.

The Administrative Office of the Courts and
Probation will swear in new probation officers in
the second floor rotunda.

Veterans Freedom March
October 24, 2026 at 11:00 a.m.

The Veterans Freedom March will draw attention
to Veteran homelessness, suicide and lack of VA
facilities and services.

Light the World Alzheimer's Awareness
November 2, 2026

The Alzheimer's Foundation of America will have
the Capitol lit teal for Alzheimer's awareness.

NBEA New-Licensing Ceremony
November 6, 2026 at 3:00 p.m.

The Nebraska Board of Engineers and Architects
will license new architects and engineers in the
second floor rotunda.

Veterans Day Holiday
November 11, 2026

The Capitol will be open for tours from 10:00
a.m. to 5:00 p.m.

Pancreatic Cancer Awareness
November 20, 2026

The Capitol will be lit purple for the University
of Nebraska Medical Center to draw attention to
Pancreatic Cancer.

Student Excellence Recognition
November 23, 2026 at 2:30 p.m.

Students excelling in Leadership and Expanded
Learning will receive the Nebraska Commissioner
of Education's Awards.

Thanksgiving Holiday
November 26 - 27, 2026

The Capitol will be closed.

Guided Tours are offered Monday-
Friday from 9:00 am to 4:00 p.m., except
at noon; Saturday and Holidays from
10:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m., except at noon;
Sunday from 1:00 to 4:00 p.m. Please call
402.471.0448 or visit www.capitol.org for
more information.

*All events at the Nebraska State Capitol
are free and open to the public.*



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THE NEWSLETTER OF THE CAPITOL COMMISSION | MAY 2026

Nebraska Capitol Commission

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Capitol Architect
Bertram Grosvenor Goodhue, 1869-1924

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The Capitol Sower, published by the Office of the Capitol Commission, is available online at www.capitol.nebraska.gov. For more information contact the Tourism Supervisor at <roxanne.smith@nebraska.gov>

Please contact us if you have any questions or comments about the content.

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Arbor Day Teamwork

Planting a tree on the Capitol grounds to celebrate Arbor Day has become a tradition, attended by dignitaries of Nebraska’s tree planting community. Ernst Herminghaus’ 1934 Landscape Plan identifies trees for each location on the grounds. Focusing on modern cultivars, the same species, oak, elm, linden and maple, are planted near the location of the original tree. It is difficult to replant the same exact spot because of the roots left behind. Original construction and subsequent Capitol restoration projects also make tree planting a challenge. Debris left

behind from the 1922-32 construction period and compacted soil from a 1998-2010 Exterior Masonry Project construction yard made planting an elm tree near the west entrance this year challenging. The ground where the tree needed to go was hard clay, especially compacted by the construction yard. The Office of the Capitol Commission’s grounds and maintenance staff took turns digging until the hole was large enough for the root ball of the new elm tree to sit properly and be ready for ceremonial tree planting. 



Capitol Commission staff, left to right, Lexis Funk, Aud Koch, Heather Dinslage, Bret Pinkleman, and Teran Kehm, pose with the planted tree. Above left, grounds staff cleared roots from the old tree. Above right, maintenance staff muscled through the hard clay to dig the hole.

Right, Lt. Governor Joe Kelly receives help from Trinity Day Care kindergarten students. Below, a team of tree planting dignitaries attended the ceremony, left to right. Stephan Jara and State Forester John Erixson, Lincoln City Forester Chris Meyers, Ritch Nelson with NRCS, Mr. Kelly, Lower Platte South NRD Vice chair Tom Green and NARD Board member John Yoakum, Hanna Pinneo, with PlantNebraska and Dayna Berry with the Arbor Day Foundation.

