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**NEBRASKA-FRIENDLY LANDSCAPES**  
Acreage Insights Clinic  
Nov. 16 in Lincoln  
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**LAST CALL FOR 4-H SCHOLARSHIPS**  
More than \$5,000 in college scholarships are available to 4-H'ers! Applications are due Jan. 1  
— see page 8

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University of Nebraska–Lincoln  
Extension in Lancaster County  
444 Cherrycreek Road, Suite A  
Lincoln, Nebraska 68528-1507

## Extension Offers Guardianship Trainings Mandated By the Nebraska Supreme Court

Maureen Burson  
UNL Extension Educator

In Nebraska, more than 2,000 guardians/conservators are appointed each year. A Guardian is defined as a person who guards or keeps safe and secure a minor child or an adult whom the law regards as incompetent to manage her/his own affairs. A Conservator is a person appointed by a court to manage the estate (money and property) of a protected person.

In 2003, a grassroots task force of concerned Nebraska citizens, courts, elder and disability-serving groups identified a need for improved statewide education of newly-appointed Guardians and Conservators. At that time, Douglas County had the only active guardian/conservator educational class, which was offered by Volunteers Intervening for Equity (V.I.E.).

The task force asked University of Nebraska–Lincoln Extension Educator Eileen Krumbach to coordinate development of an educational training for Guardians/Conservators which could be offered statewide. Several agencies and individuals collaborated in the three-year process. Partners included the Administrative Office of the Courts, Nebraska State Bar Association Volunteer Lawyer Project, the Arc of Nebraska, Nebraska Health and Human Services Adult Protective Services, Nebraska Developmental Disabilities Planning Council/HHS, Region V Services and some Guardians.



Participants receive a certificate of completion to show judges they have completed the mandatory training.



UNL Extension Educator Eileen Krumbach (center) and volunteer attorney Bill Chapin (right) presented a Guardianship Training in September at the Lancaster Extension Education Center.

UNL Extension began presenting statewide Guardian/Conservator trainings on January 1, 2006. The trainings fulfill the mandated guardian/conservator education requirements set by the Nebraska Supreme Court (in a few situations, the mandate is waived by judges). The class is offered quarterly in all Judicial Districts other than Douglas County and monthly in Lancaster County. V.I.E continues to offer monthly classes in Douglas County.

The three-hour training provides participants with detailed information, including: quick reference sheets, inventory checklists, annual reporting forms and others. At each training, a volunteer attorney through the Nebraska State Bar Association is onsite to answer general legal questions.

Following the class, participants receive a certificate of attendance to file as proof of completion with the county court.

### Offered Monthly In Lincoln

Guardianship Training is offered monthly at the Lancaster Extension Education Center, 444 Cherrycreek Road, Lincoln. They will be held on Nov. 21, Dec. 12, Jan. 23 and Feb. 20, 5:30–8:30 p.m. Call (402) 362-5508 at least two days prior to the training date to register. Cost is \$15. For statewide training dates, go to <http://extension.unl.edu/guardianship>

As of September, more than 600 participants statewide (155 in Lancaster County) have completed UNL Extension's Guardianship Training. Participants report they gain a better understanding of guidelines regarding responsibilities, legal aspects and obligations to both the Ward and the court. They also gain a better understanding of finances and forms required by the court annually.

Evaluations from participants repeatedly indicate, “While I did not want to have to go to this class, I am very glad I did. I learned a lot. I know what I need to do now as a Guardian. Thank you!”

## Guardianships Happen for Variety of Reasons

Unexpected things happen. Kari, 23 years of age, became Guardian of her father as a result of an automobile accident in July. Her mother and grandmother both died in the accident. Her father, Dennis Banish, is undergoing treatment at Madonna Rehabilitation Center. Many people such as Kari who participate in the UNL Extension Guardian/Conservator Training are faced with decisions which are hard to imagine until they actually happen.

Kari says, “I woke up and I was 23 years old and the next day I was 45,” explaining her instant responsibilities. My mom and dad have always been there for us, so of course we will be there for them.

“I’m the oldest of three children and I feel like Guardianship is my responsibility.

I’m also personal representative for my mom’s estate.

Kari and her husband relocated from Ogallala to her childhood home in Filley to help out with her dad and 15-year-old brother. Her 22-year-old sister, Kelly, returned from Maryland to help.

“This class helped me figure out my legal obligations as Guardian to my father and to the court,” says Hill. “I learned a ton. A key point was how to complete the paperwork, and when and where to send it.”

People are appointed Guardians and Conservators for a variety of reasons. Of

**This class helped me figure out my legal obligations as Guardian to my father. I learned a ton.**

—Kari Hill



Kari Hill (right) became the guardian of her father, Dennis Benash (left) after a car accident severely injured him. He holds artwork by his 15-year-old son.

the 13 participants at a recent Guardian/Conservator Training, seven were grandparents. More than 781 children are being raised by grandparents in Lancaster County (based on Census Data). Reasons see *GUARDIANSHIPS* on page 10