



Ag-Urban Leadership Initiative
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***Summary:** The first annual Ag Urban Xtreme Strength Summit, hosted by Iowa Soybean Association's Ag Urban Leadership class, featured outstanding speakers, including futurist and agricultural expert Dr. Jay Lehr. The Summit drew a crowd of educators, economic development directors, legislators and business leaders. Gov. Branstad has requested a meeting with class members to hear their insights and suggestions.*

Interviews and photos available upon request.

Ag Urban Xtreme Strength Summit Draws Exceptional Crowd, Features Exceptional Speakers

Ankeny –The first annual Ag Urban Xtreme Strength Summit, hosted by the Iowa Soybean Association's (ISA's) Ag Urban Leadership class of 2011, featured outstanding speakers and drew a large crowd of educators, economic development directors, legislators and business leaders.

The Summit, held at the ISU Alumni Center in Ames on Wednesday, Aug. 24, was the final class project for the group of 18 rural and urban leaders who worked together since November 2010 as participants in ISA's Ag Urban Leadership Initiative, to study Iowa's strengths and look at ways to replicate them across the state.

The Ag Urban Leadership Initiative has attracted the interest of Governor Terry Branstad, who was unable to attend the Summit but has requested a September

meeting with class members to hear their insights and suggestions for “next steps” in dialogue and partnership between Iowa’s rural and urban sectors.

The Summit featured six speakers, recruited by class members, who spoke of local success stories in economic development, product innovation, entrepreneurial development, education and agricultural expertise. Billed as “quick hitting” presentations, they set the stage for keynote speaker Dr. Jay Lehr, futurist and agricultural expert, to tie their comments together and challenge those in attendance to capitalize on Iowans’ ability to work through rural and urban conflicts and build on strength.

Lehr asked the 90 conference attendees to utilize the strength of Iowa’s core business, agriculture, and wrap future success around the opportunities inherent in the Iowa landscape. He also challenged the group to make the Ag Urban dialogue, including the Summit, an annual event.

Besides Lehr, speakers for the day included Iowans Todd Becker, CEO of Green Plains Renewable Energy of Omaha, Nebraska; Molly Boyle, 2011 Iowa Teacher of the Year from Waukee; Brenda Dryer, Mitchell County Economic Development director from Osage; Kevin Kimle, Agricultural Entrepreneurship Initiative Director from ISU; Alan Walker, president of Upper Iowa University; and Bill Couser, farmer and cattle producer from Nevada.

Legislators in attendance included: Rep. Annette Sweeney, Rep. Renee Schulte, Rep. Dan Rasmussen; Rep. Josh Byrnes and Rep. Dave Deyoe.

Rep. Schulte, from Cedar Rapids, is a member of the 2011 AgUrban Leadership class which planned the Summit. Schulte said, "Iowa has many strengths and jobs in the agbusiness arena that we do not often talk about. In tough economic times, our ag industry remains stable and even prospers. Building a bridge of communication between our ag and urban communities will help us grow our economy and highlight the high tech jobs available in our state."

Another alumni of the class, Rep. Sweeney, who is a farmer and currently serves as chair of the Iowa House Agriculture Committee, agrees. Sweeney said, “The Ag Urban Xtreme Strength Summit was a perfect example of communication among proactive

individuals to educate each other on issues that are concerning for all of agriculture and America.”

Besides Schulte, members of the 2011 Ag Urban Initiative class are: Brook Boehmier, Hampton; Jerome Burken, Clinton; Michael Cooley, Orient; Zach Dalluge, Grafton; Angela Fredericks, Johnston; Wayne Fredericks, Osage; Adam Gibson, Nevada; Kim Gibson, Des Moines; Lindsey Haley, Mt. Pleasant; Kori Heuss, Ames; Karen Johnson, Avoca; Julie Kenney, Ankeny; Brad Kinsinger, LaPorte City; Craig Maltby, Clive; Kevin Ross, Minden; Tony Toigo, Indianola; and Delbert Westphalen, Atlantic.

The Ag Urban Initiative will begin recruitment for its 2012 class in October. Anyone interested in joining is encouraged to call Carol Balvanz at 515-669-9174.

To learn more about the Ag Urban Initiative, visit www.ag-urbanleadership.com

To learn more about ISA, visit its website at www.iasoybeans.com.

The Iowa Soybean Association develops policies and programs that help farmers expand profit opportunities while promoting environmentally sensitive production using the soybean checkoff and other resources. The Association is made up of more than 8,000 farmer members and is governed by an elected volunteer board of 21 farmers.

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