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NEBRASKA 4-H WELCOMES LIL' GREEN

(Lincoln, NE) – Lil' Green, the official University of Nebraska–Lincoln Extension 4-H Youth Development Program Mascot, is the newest member of the 4-H family. Lil' Green is the innovation of the UNL Extension 4-H Marketing work group, which was challenged with the opportunity to increase awareness of the Nebraska 4-H Program amongst potential 4-H youth and parents.

In 2005, National 4-H Council conducted research in the area of 4-H name recognition and favorability ratings by polling 1,000 adults across the nation. While the findings shared that most Americans have a positive 'association' with 4-H, many lacked any specific knowledge about 4-H. These findings echoed feedback gathered in 2001 from 4-H youth and volunteers during a five-year strategic planning process entitled "4-H Visions," conducted by Nebraska 4-H staff.

As a result of "4-H Visions," a marketing work group was formed to address issues surrounding educating non-4-H youth and families about the benefits of participation in the 4-H program. According to Vickie Greve, 4-H Youth Development Specialist and Marketing Committee Co-chair, "The marketing group wanted 4-H awareness and knowledge to come from something that would have a strong visual presence throughout Nebraska." The birth of the Nebraska 4-H mascot was just one of the marketing strategies that evolved from the committee.

Lil' Green grew from many hours of discussion and input from a variety of sources including youth, volunteers and staff from across the state. "We tried hard to design a mascot that would capture 4-H in a way that would be timeless enough to appeal to future 4-H members while honoring the original foundations and the admirable and noteworthy characteristics of the 4-H program and its connection to the University of Nebraska–Lincoln," said Greve.

Lil' Green and the supporting print promotional materials were made possible from a grant from the University of Nebraska–Lincoln Extension Administration. "We are really excited about Lil' Green's ability to help 4-H have a visible presence throughout Nebraska," said Greve. "Currently, one out of every three age eligible youth in Nebraska participate in 4-H through a club, school enrichment program, camp or special interest program."

According to Greve, "Our goal is to increase 4-H enrollment by five percent in the coming year. We want all youth in Nebraska to benefit from the leadership, citizenship and life skills learned in 4-H. We think Lil' Green will be able to help us dispel some myths that 4-H is only for farm kids and help us teach youth from 5 to 18 and their families about the benefits of belonging to 4-H.

Lil' Green is a fun new addition to our 4-H family. It is the intent that the 108 inch Nebraska 4-H mascot with brown hair, blue eyes and a friendly smile will find his way to your community in the near future.

For more information on how sanctioned Nebraska 4-H groups can rent Lil' Green contact: Tracy Pracheil at (402) 472-9016 or email her at tpracheil2@unl.edu .

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