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## **Tekamah-Herman FCCLA honored for community partnership in education**

(Lincoln, Neb.) Tekamah-Herman Family, Career and Community Leaders of America (FCCLA), received the 2014 First Lady's Outstanding Community Partnership in Education award. This award is presented to partnerships among community organizations, schools, government agencies, or others including national service that demonstrate cooperation and combining resources, bringing significant advantages to volunteer service in education.

Nebraska's First Lady Sally Ganem presented the representative group with the award on April 11, 2014 during the annual First Lady's Outstanding Community Service Awards luncheon at The Thompson Center on the University of Nebraska Omaha campus.

For seven years Tekamah-Herman School's FCCLA, Burt County Food Bank and Tekamah-Herman, Decatur Church/Community Council have partnered to facilitate a backpack program in school to help families in need of food for their children on the weekends. Thirty-four and one half percent of the 531 students live below the poverty level. This translated to 1680 free lunches and 421 reduced cost lunches served during the month of December 2013.

The backpack program aims to fill the gap in family needs by sending non-perishable food items and a milk voucher home with children weekly. This effort includes filling and delivering the backpacks, which takes 15-20 minutes for three to five of our 31 FCCLA members, in grades 9-12. Volunteers contribute approximately 1 hour per week throughout the 40-week school year.

High school students other than FCCLA members often ask to help, stating that it makes them feel good to know they are helping someone else. This is very welcome and allows more students to be involved.

These partnerships have made students more aware of the challenges that their community faces. It has inspired them to consider other ways to volunteer. For example the FCCLA sponsors a coat drive every year to collect warm outerwear for distribution not only locally but also through the Salvation Army in Omaha. A relationship has been built with the Salvation Army's Night Watch program by volunteering with them for the last six years.

The Tekamah-Herman School backpack program emphasizes the family and the community of FCCLA to the members.

For more information about the First Lady's Outstanding Community Service Awards, visit ServeNebraska at, [www.serve.nebraska.gov](http://www.serve.nebraska.gov).

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