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SERVING THE COMMUNITY FOR MORE THAN 100 YEARS

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BRENT McCOWN/Tribune file photo

The Prairie Loft Center was named as Top Project by the Nebraska State Resource Conservation and Development Association. The main barn on the property was originally part of the Hastings State Hospital where patients raised animals and grew produce.

Prairie Loft wins state honor

SHAY BURK

sburk@hastingstribune.com

For the second time this year, the Prairie Loft Center for Outdoor and Agricultural Learning is being recognized by a statewide organization.

Prairie Loft was named as the first recipient of the Top Project Award by the Nebraska State Resource Conservation and Development Association. Members of the South Central Nebraska Resource Conservation and Development group presented the award to Prairie Loft's board of directors Tuesday night.

"It's very humbling in the fact that on this journey we're taking with Prairie Loft, we're just in the beginning," said Dave Berens, Prairie Loft board president. "To be recognized, it's a great honor and very humbling."

The Prairie Loft, which opened to the public in 2007, is an outdoor educational center on the site of the former Ingleside farm, which was

operated by what is now known as the Hastings Regional Center.

Amy Sandeen, Prairie Loft program director, said the Top Project award is meaningful because of the great projects going on across the state.

"I'm thrilled because there are over 150 projects and we were named the Top Project," Sandeen said.

The Prairie Loft was honored based on the association's key values of conservation, protecting natural resources, improving the economic activity, and enhancing the environment and standard of living in the area.

"I feel like the Prairie Loft has a focus on all of those things in our mission, so I'm pleased we were recognized for that," Sandeen said.

The Prairie Loft's mission is to teach agricultural appreciation, outdoor education, cultural traditions and the wise use of natural resources. Those goals are met through the various classes, activities and large

community events held at Prairie Loft.

"I know there are a lot of good things going on in the state in the area of resource conservation and development, so to be singled out is a real honor," Sandeen said.

Berens said that while he and the rest of the board are humbled that the Prairie Loft was honored as the first recipient of this award, it's important to note that the award isn't just for the board.

"The thing that's humbling about that is it's not just about the board, it's about the volunteers, all the people who have helped donate to this project. It's really a community award," he said. "So it's really an award for everyone who's been involved with Prairie Loft."

Earlier this year, the Prairie Loft was named as one of the state's Hidden Treasures by Heritage Nebraska, a statewide preservation organization, for its preservation of the farm once used by the Hastings Regional Center.