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## **S-O FFA to share \$200,000 grant for leadership program**

**Smithfield Foods, Inc., and Murphy-Brown, LLC, its hog production subsidiary, along with the National FFA Organization, on Thursday launched a two-year Learners to Leaders alliance that will help prepare FFA students from Sibley-Ocheyedan High School for eventual agribusiness careers.**

**Sibley-Ocheyedan is one of six northwest Iowa communities that will benefit from Smithfield Foods' donation of \$200,000 to enroll students in FFA programs that emphasize agribusiness.** The other selected high schools are in Graettinger, Laurens, Rock Valley, Sioux Rapids and Swea City.

Tony Small, division director of education for the National FFA Organization, pointed out, "The Smithfield Foods Learners to Leaders alliance is an invaluable tool for helping our young people fulfill their potential. The program we are developing is designed to enhance the leadership and career development skills, as well as personal growth, of the students as they advance through the four-year FFA program. This program focuses on the final two years of a student's FFA career and offers a wide range of skills for students interested in pursuing high-demand careers in agriculture, food and natural resources industries."

"We're excited about Learners to Leaders and the opportunities it affords our students to fully prepare themselves to achieve academic excellence as they advance their educational pursuits beyond our classrooms," said Mike Earll, agriculture teacher at Sibley-Ocheyedan High School.

During the two-year Learners to Leaders/FFA program, student activities will include:

Participating in state-supported conferences;

Planning and arranging speakers/field trips;

Attending the state and national FFA conventions with an emphasis on leadership workshops, tours and agribusiness sessions;

Participating in monthly leadership activities;

Developing a program of activities, including a major community service project;

Applying for an international opportunity to study global agriculture.

The program will run from April 2008 through April 2010.

The partnership is part of Learners to Leaders, a national educational alliance funded by Smithfield Foods and made up of Smithfield's independent operating companies and local educational partners. The alliance includes the local chapters of the National FFA Organization, which is developing the leadership, career success and personal growth program that will be integrated into existing FFA agricultural education programs at the six high schools.

"We have always been firm believers in giving back to our communities, and we can think of no better way than to help northwest Iowa FFA students benefit from additional opportunities to both develop their leadership skills and grow on a personal level," said C. Larry Pope, president and chief executive officer at Smithfield Foods.

"To be competitive in today's environment, it is critical that Iowa's young people have skills in more than just production agriculture they need to understand agribusiness, too," Pope said. "And Smithfield Foods' alliance with FFA will provide them with access to the opportunity to develop the necessary skills to become leaders in agriculture or agribusiness."

"This is a wonderful opportunity for agriculture students in northwest Iowa to gain valuable insights into what it takes to succeed in whatever agriculture or agribusiness career path they wind up choosing," said Todd Wilson, grower development manager of the Midwest Division of Murphy-Brown.

"Learners to Leaders and FFA make a great team because we're committed to giving our young people the skills to be leaders of tomorrow," said Dennis Treacy, vice president of environmental and corporate affairs at Smithfield Foods. "Smithfield Foods believes that education is the cornerstone to a thriving community."

Smithfield Foods is a global food company with operations in 13 countries through wholly owned subsidiaries and joint ventures. Headquartered in Smithfield, Va., the company produces more than 50 brands of pork, beef and turkey products and more than 200 gourmet foods. Employing more than 57,000 people across the globe, Smithfield Foods is the world's largest producer and processor of pork and a leader in turkey processing, cattle feeding and beef processing.