

2007 CONFERENCE BOASTS ANOTHER SUCCESS

The Association of Iowa Fairs enjoyed typical winter weather and another near record turnout for its 2007 Conference and Annual Meeting held on December 7, 8 and 9, at the Holiday Inn Airport in Des Moines.

A large contingent of representatives from the 107 fairs in Iowa, plus representatives of the 150 plus associate members converged onto the Conference Center for a weekend of learning, sharing and fun. Preliminary registration figures showed just at 1,400 people registered for the Conference.

Spouse's activity on Friday afternoon included a tour of the Metro Market and the South Union Bread Company and a visit to the Joie De Vie Tea Salon. The opening business meeting of the Association was held on Friday afternoon, as well as I.A.F.E. (International Association of Fairs & Expositions) sponsored workshop immediately after the AIF's opening business meeting. Dave Taylor, Manager of the Western Fair in London, Ontario, presented "Is It Time to Re-Package, Re-Market, and Rejuvenate Your Fair". Dave's presentation proved to be one of the highlights of Conference, as evidenced by the enthusiastic response from a full room of attendees.

Two seminars were held Friday afternoon after the I.A.F.E workshop. They included "Building to Meet Your Fairs' Needs" presented by Chuck and Chip Overton, AIA, Keffer Overton Architects, Des Moines; and "New Faces in New Places and Tossed Salad" moderated by AIF directors.

The "Partlow Reception" was held Friday early evening for all members of the Association, which was followed by the Awards Banquet.

The Saturday schedule was packed with seminars, workshops and the ever-popular entertainment showcase. Saturday workshops and seminars included "RAGBRAI, the Method Behind the Madness" moderated by T.J. Juskiewicz, Director of RAGBRAI; "Tossed Salad" moderated by Association Directors; "Getting Youth More Involved in Your Fair" presented by members of State 4-H Council, "Youth Fair Boards" moderated Fred Jenkins, Wapello County Regional Fair, Eldon, Mike Bradley & Tom Wolfe, Elroy Fair, Elroy Wisconsin; ; Advertising & Marketing Your Fair" presented by Candice Nash-Farrer, Plymouth County Fair. "Social & Charitable Gaming & Food Service, Licensing & Regulations" presented by Sherri Hopkins & Beverly Zylstra of the Iowa Department of Inspections and Appeals; "2008 Fair Ideas" presented by Arlette Hollister, Superintendent of Food, Iowa State Fair; "Reaching Your "Echo Boomers" presented by Stephanie Miller of Fayette, Cindy Thelke of Dows, Alex Recker of Arlington and Ryan Brinkman of Gowrie; "Emerald Ash Borer-- What it means to your Fairgrounds" presented by James Romer, I.S.U. Extension Program Specialist, and "Fairs & Food Concessions - Working Towards a Common Goal" moderated by Eric Campbell of Campbell Concessions.

Saturday evening featured the very popular "Social A'Fair and Auction". This included a large social and supper attended by over 700 Association members. Following the auction, AIF President Erlene Leonard, her husband Terry, and members of the Jasper County Fair Board hosted the "President's Reception" in the Presidential Suite.

Sunday morning started out with a church service dedicated to deceased fair board members in Iowa followed by the popular "Fairman's Breakfast". Following the breakfast, two panel discussions were held, one discussing livestock auctions and the other a review of the Consumer Protection Workshops that were held in Iowa in November.

Conference Business Meetings Held

Business meetings held during the 2007 Conference included the Association's Annual Meeting, the Iowa State Agricultural Society Annual Meeting, O.A.B.A. meeting, Iowa Horse Racing Association meeting, Iowa Foundation for Agriculture Advancement meeting and AIF Associate's meeting.

"Blue Ribbon Fairs" Honored

2007 "Blue Ribbon Fair" awards were presented to 6 fairs, each representing their respective district, at the Awards Banquet, held Friday evening during the Conference. These went to the O'Brien County Fair, Primghar; Wright County Fair, Eagle Grove; Linn County Fair, Central City; Taylor County Fair, Bedford; Marion County Fair, Knoxville and Iowa County Fair, Marengo. This award is present to one fair in each of the six fair districts in Iowa each year. The fair must have shown progress in providing service to the 4-H and FFA programs in their community, plus show distinguished service to the community in both fair and non-fair areas.

Awards & Scholarships Presented at 2007 Conference

Honors given out at the Friday evening Awards Banquet include; the "Fairman of the Year" award, which was presented to Roger Ahrenholtz, of the Shelby County Fair, and the "Leo Overland Memorial Showman of the Year" award which was presented to J&M Displays and Flashing Thunder Fireworks. Two Iowa youth were each presented with \$1000 college scholarships, courtesy of Staats Custom Awards of Mt. Pleasant Iowa, and the Association of Iowa Fairs. They were Danielle Holmes of Lu Verne and Joe Catanzareti of Mt Ayr.

2007 inductees into the Association's Hall of Fame included Richard Frye (posthumously) of Independence, for his dedication to the Buchanan County Fair; and Fred & Ila Mae Fenchel of Fred T Fenchel Entertainment Agency in Mason City.

Congratulations to these AIF members, and Iowa youth, on the honors they were presented with.

Don Cain Elected 2008 President of the Association Board Officers and Directors Also Elected

Association directors elected to the Board include Dave Hoffman of Le Mars in Plymouth County, Alan Brown of Hampton in Franklin County, Lynn Dunn of Marion in Linn County, John Straight of Logan in Harrison County, Curtis Sebolt of Cincinnati in Appanoose County, and Richard Smith of West Liberty in Muscatine County. The 2008 officers of the Association Board will find Don Cain of Delmar serving as President, Dave Hoffman of Le Mars serving as 1st Vice President, Alan Brown of Hampton serving as 2nd Vice President, and Erlene Leonard of Colfax will serve as Past President. The AIF Board of Directors has selected Tom & Sue Barnes of Cresco to serve as the Association's Executive Director and Executive Secretary/Treasurer, respectively, for the upcoming year.

Iowa State Fair Board Elections Results

Iowa State Fair Board directors were also elected during the State Agricultural Society meeting, held during the Conference. Those elected as directors to the Board include Bill Neubrand of Le Mars, Don Greiman of Garner, Dave Huinker of Decorah, CW Thomas of Guthrie Center, Randy Brown of Osceola, and Bob Schlutz of Columbus Junction. Officers of the Iowa State Fair Board for 2008 will be Gary Van Aernam serving as President, Randy Brown serving as Vice President; and Jeanne Partlow serving as the Treasurer. Gary Slater is the Secretary/Manager of the Iowa State Fair.

Thank to Our Sponsors

Special thanks to several 2007 Conference sponsors. They included Evan's United Shows, Smith's Amusements and Concession, Hendrick's Sound Service and to I.A.F.E. for sponsoring the seminar presented by Dave Taylor on Friday afternoon. Sponsors definitely help a great deal and we certainly appreciate their efforts to help make the Conference the success it is.

Auction Sets Record -- Near Record \$21,700 Raised

The benefit auction, held Saturday evening in conjunction with the Social A'Fair, had a record 140 items donated from member fairs and associates. The proceeds from the auction are used for expenses that are incurred by the Association in its efforts to secure legislation that has a positive effect on the fair industry in Iowa. This year the auction raised just over \$21,700.

Special thanks to those members who not only donated auction items, but to those who donated money. Also special thanks to the buyers of the items. The auction is one of the highlights of the Conference, providing a fun time to socialize with all the Association members, while at the same time raise much needed money that is used to benefit all the members of the Association.

Legislative Update

Once again fairs are asked to contact their legislators concerning several items of importance to the fair industry in Iowa. First and foremost, the 2008 state funding is again being sought for all fairs that qualify for state funding as outlined in the Iowa Code.

Again this year the Association Board of Directors will be hosting a breakfast for all legislators and their staff on Thursday February 14. This will be held from 7:00 a.m. to 9:00 a.m. in Room 116 (main floor) of the State Capitol. This event is a great way to showcase the Fairs and promote what they do for their communities to our legislators. All Fairs are invited to attend this event. Contact the AIF office for more information.

Your help is needed, and you are asked to contact your legislators and ask their support on all of the legislation the Association sponsors. Take the time now to respond.

2008 SPRING DISTRICT MEETINGS
Tentative Dates and Locations (Dates and times could change)

Please make note of the Spring District meetings. The recording secretary of each District has sent mailings on these meetings to all Fairs in their respective District. This mailing will contain meeting details, such as specific location, date and time, and meeting agenda. It is vital that all fairs attend these meetings. They are very informative, and the Association uses these to keep its members up to date on current issues. In addition, the final payment of your state aid will be distributed at these meetings.

NORTHWEST DISTRICT-- Saturday, March 15, 2008

Hosts: Buena Vista County Fair Board – Alta Community Center -- Alta
Social starts at 5:00 p.m. -- Meal at 6:00 p.m., meeting to follow
For information and reservations contact Lisa Paysen at 712-664-2967
E-mail jlrcjp@netins.net

NORTH CENTRAL DISTRICT -- Sunday afternoon – March 16, 2008

Hosts: Mitchell County Fair Board – Location to be determined -- Osage
Social starts at 12:30 p.m. -- Meal at 1:00 p.m. with meeting to follow.
For information and reservations contact: Deb McVicker at 641-425-4407
E-mail debmcvicker@hotmail.com

NORTHEAST DISTRICT -- Sunday afternoon – March 9, 2008

Hosts: Clayton County Fair Board – Johnson’s Supper Club -- Elkader
Social starts at 1:00 p.m. -- Meal at 1:30 p.m.; Business meeting to follow.
For information and reservations contact Mary Ester Pullin, District Secretary at 319-233-2474
E-mail mary.pullin@regions.com

SOUTHWEST DISTRICT -- Saturday evening – March 29, 2008

Hosts: Monona County Fair Board -- Villager Inn, Walnut, IA -- North side of I-80, exit 46
No reservations needed. Buffet supper will be served.
Social starts at 5:30 p.m. -- Meal at 6:00 p.m.; Business meeting at 7:00 p.m.
For information contact Kathy Bozwell, District Secretary, at 641-322-4421
E-mail bozwell_k@hotmail.com

SOUTH CENTRAL DISTRICT -- Sunday afternoon – March 30, 2008

Hosts: Warren County Fair Board -- Sports Page Grill & Bar, Indianola
Social starts at 1:30 p.m. --Meal at 1:45 p.m. Business meeting to follow meal.
For information and reservations contact Erlene Leonard, District Secretary, at 515-674-3067
E-mail eleonard@fbx.com

SOUTHEAST DISTRICT -- Saturday evening --- March 15, 2008

Hosts: Washington County Fair Board -- Washington County Fairgrounds, Washington, Iowa
Social starts at 6:00 p.m. -- Meal at 6:30 p.m.; Business meeting to follow
For information and reservations contact Jim Sloan, District Secretary,
Email: jsloan@iowatelecom.net

Rev It Up at Iowa Speedway

The AIF is working with the staff at Iowa Speedway to host a “County Fair Day” at the Speedway this year. The race date will most likely be May 18, when the Speedway hosts the NASCAR East –West Challenge. Details on this event will be available at the upcoming spring district meetings.

2008 Annual Meeting & Conference

The 2008 Conference and Annual Meeting of the Association of Iowa Fairs will be held on December 5, 6 and 7 at the Airport Holiday Inn, on Fleur Drive in Des Moines.

KEEP UP TO DATE – VISIT WWW.IOWAFAIRS.COM

The Association's web site is updated as often as needed to keep everyone up to date on happenings and changes with the Association members. While we only print our membership directory once a year, changes always take place during throughout year; this is why the web site is important. Plus, as we have time, we change the "Current News" with items that are important to our members. The "Fairs Only" site is full of information for member fairs. All Fairs need to setup their user ID and password to have access to this area of the website. Contact the AIF office for instructions.

... FROM THE OFFICE ...

It was another busy and challenging year in 2007 for our fairs. Again the summer heat and intermittent rain kept you all guessing and adjusting schedules. Even with the somewhat uncooperative weather Fairs reported a positive year, with good crowds and overall income was up over last year. As usual everyone worked hard and endured to make sure that their fair was a success. Congratulations to all members for their effort, especially to the hundreds of volunteers that make the fair industry as strong as it is. And especially would like to extend appreciation to all our associate members for making the fairs, and the fair industry in Iowa, as strong and successful as it is. It could not be done without these great members.

Not to be repetitive, as I seem to report each year that once again the Conference was a big success. I am truly amazed at the participation, the ever strong attendance, and the cooperation the AIF receives from all of its members, both fairs and associate members, that unite for this great event. We were presented with great workshops which were all very popular. Showcasing was very good, and the fun auction hit a new record for items sold and near record ob money earned. All in all the AIF Board was very pleased with all facets of it. Conference registrations were just at 1400 people, again proving that Conference is very popular with our members. I know everyone learned new things and got great ideas for their own fair or festival. Your AIF Board is dedicated to making the Conference the "#1, must do, must attend" item on our members calendars each year. And evidenced by the participation, I feel that Conference is very important to all our members. We certainly look forward to the Conference every year. It is indeed a lot of work, but seeing all of our "fair family" is really great.

As usual our March calendar is full of traveling around the state, plus we are planning on attending the Zone 5 I.A.F.E meeting in Hutchinson Kansas. Sue & I are also planning on attending as many of the District meetings as we can. Again this year your AIF Board will be hosting a breakfast for all the legislators and staff at the State Capitol Building. This will take place on February 14. The Board will be meeting with legislators concerning the state funding, and other legislation that is beneficial to the fair industry in Iowa.

I want to express a sincere "Thank-you" to those fair folks who attended the Consumer Protection Workshops, held in November in Osceola and Mason City. It is great to see you all understand the importance of the message delivered. It is the goal of the AIF to train all the fairs in Iowa. In total, 71 persons attended of these workshops. We were pleased with the turnout. Look for announcement of another Workshop that will be offered this coming year.

As I briefly mentioned at Conference, I am very excited about a stronger partnership that the AIF and Iowa State University Extension are now working on. There are several areas of improvement that will be addressed, and new and exciting programming will also be presented in future years. I am truly impressed with the openness and eagerness shown by the people at I.S.U. Extension over the ideas and issues presented. As they say, Rome wasn't built in a day. We have 'laid the foundation' and now the construction phase starts.

Finally, before we realize it, spring will be upon us. Even though our area of Iowa has received more snow and some ice earlier than usual this winter season, we all are thinking of spring. And a sure sign of spring rapidly approaching is all of the gardening catalogs Sue has been getting of late. She really puts a lot of work into her flower gardens. Sue puts her "Master Gardener" title to the test, as our home and fairgrounds really reflects her talents. And as with all of you, we are preparing for our own Mighty Howard County Fair in June. As in past years, Sue & I will find ourselves hitting the highways and back roads of Iowa traveling to fairs and festivals. 2008 looks to be another fun, and hectic year. We hope to see you soon.

Tom Barnes, Executive Director