

2023 CONFERENCE & ANNUAL MEETING



Serving Iowa Fairs Since 1907

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The Association of Iowa Fairs held its 2023 Conference and Annual Meeting on December 8 to 10, with the Holiday Inn Airport in Des Moines serving as the host facility of the Conference. Representatives from the 106 fairs in Iowa and of the 128 associate members converged onto the Conference Center for a weekend of learning, sharing and fun.

The 2023 AIF Conference again set several high marks with attendance and meal reservations. Final attendance for the Conference showed 1,208 people registered for the event. Along with higher than usual meal reservations, the fun auction also set a new record, with just over \$45,000 raised for the AIF.

The Conference got underway on Friday morning with the opening business meeting of the Association, followed by several workshops and idea-sharing discussions.

Workshops that were featured on Friday afternoon included:

- *'Conference Newcomer'*, led by Tom Barnes (AIF)
- *'Food Service Guidelines'*, led by Julie Kraling
(Food and Consumer Safety Bureau, Iowa Dept. of Inspections & Appeals)
- *'Alcohol Licensing & Sales'*, led by Nate Bayer, Tiffney Brown and Chuck Crabtree (Education & Outreach with Iowa Alcoholic Beverages Division)
- *'Volunteer Programs'*, led by Paula Barnes, ISF Volunteer Program Coordinator, and Meg Courter, ISF Blue Ribbon Foundation Volunteer Coordinator
- *'Fair Marketing That Gets Results!'*, led by Shelly Greving, Emerge Marketing Solutions and Tricia Rosendahl, Wright County Fair
- *'Tourism is Viable Economic Development for Your Community'*, led by Cheslea Lerud, Executive Director, Iowa Travel Industry Partners
- *'What's On Your Mind'*, led by Dave Shinker (AIF)

Jenn Dunn (Linn County Fair) hosted a social and networking event focused on IAFE's Young Professionals. The late Friday afternoon social proved to be popular as a sizable number of younger fair board members and spouses were in attendance. All enjoyed refreshments and snacks, while networking with others.

A new event at the Conference this year was the 'Honky-Tonk Happy Hour',



held Friday evening prior to the Awards Banquet. Four AIF associate members who hosted this fun event included Edwards Marketing, Grandstand

Concerts, Spectrum Weather Insurance and Thunder & Lightning Productions.

The annual Awards Banquet was held Friday evening for members of the Association. Honors presented at the Banquet included the "Fairman of the Year", the "Leo Overland Memorial Showman of the Year" and recognizing the Fairs that received the AIF's "Blue Ribbon Fair" award for 2023. In addition, the 2023 Hall of Fame inductees and recipients of the AIF's scholarship were also recognized at the Awards Banquet.

Friday evening also featured the popular live entertainment showcase, which was held after the Awards Banquet.

Jack Stahlmann, the "Don't Flinch Guy", got Saturday off and running by sharing his most requested presentation *'The Intangible It'*. Jack's keynote focused on the "IT" factor that makes certain actors superstars and shares how fair folks can use those lessons to go from a small player to a star with their own Fair. Jack was a big hit with the standing room only crowd.



Saturday Workshops included:

- *'Livestock Updates'*, led by Dr. Jeff Kaisand, State Veterinarian, and Celine Beggs-Shoemaker, ISU Extension 4-H Animal Science Specialist
- *'A Guide to Better Smartphone Videos'*, led by Chris Snider, Drake University
- *'Fair Secretary/Manager Workshop'*, led by Ashley Fitzgerald, Boone County Fair
- *'Rethink Everything'*, led by Kyle Palmer, Artists & Attractions, and Shawn Loter, Mississippi Valley Fair
- *'Fair Marketing That Gets Results'*, led by Shelly Greving, Emerge Marketing Solutions and Tricia Rosendahl, Wright County Fair
- *'Marketing Your Fair'*, led by Leon Edwards, Edwards Marketing
- *'Intro to Generative AI'*, led by Chris Snider and Chris Porter (Drake University)
- *'Legal Responsibilities of a Fair Board'*, led by Brittany Lumley, Attorney, LS2 Group
- *'So, You're Having a Truck & Tractor Pull'*, led by Ryan Sieck, ECIPA

Saturday evening featured the extremely popular "Social A'Fair and Auction". This event included a social and a Fair food themed menu that was a big hit with the attendees. The Social and Auction was attended by over 700 Association members. The auction benefited from the generosity of its member Fairs and Associate members who donated 150 items to the auction. Proceeds from the auction are used for expenses that are incurred by the Association in its promotional efforts of its members and to secure legislation that benefits the fair industry in Iowa. This year the auction raised just over \$45,000.00, a new record.

Following the Social A'Fair and Auction the *'President's Reception'* was held, hosted by 2023 AIF Board President Danny Olson and his family, and members of the Montgomery County Fair Board.

Sunday morning started out with a church service dedicated to deceased fair board members and fair volunteers in Iowa, followed by the popular *"Fairman's Breakfast"*.

The Sunday morning speaker featured Aaron Putze, well-known Central Iowa businessman, speaker, author, and life coach. His presentation focused on fair folks using five practical and

actionable keys to shift their fairs into a new gear. Aaron's address to the capacity crowd proved to be a wonderful way to end the 2023 Conference.

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



Hall of Fame Inductee



Jim Sloan (right)

Wapello County Regional Fair, Eldon

Fair Person of the Year



Tricia Rosendahl (right)

Wright County Fair, Eagle Grove

2024 AIF Board President Jon Baltes (right) presents 2023 AIF Board President Danny Olson (left) with a plaque recognizing his leadership in 2023.



Leo Overland Memorial Showman of the Year



Wright Rodeo Company

Barry Wright & Family, Lucas IA

Award accepted for the Wright family by Kim Etter (right)



ANOTHER RECORD AUCTION!

The annual auction on Saturday evening featured 150 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 help grow and benefit the fair industry in Iowa.

This year the auction raised a record \$45,215.00.

Thanks to all who supported the auction!!



AIF SCHOLARSHIPS AWARDED



Annabelle Newton (middle) of Vinton and Nathan Lynch (right) of Boone were each awarded a \$1,000 college scholarship, courtesy of the Association of Iowa Fairs. AIF Board President Danny Olson (left) made the presentation at the Awards Banquet.

Congratulations to Annabell & Nathan!

Mark Your Calendar

Future AIF Conference & Annual Meeting Dates

December 13 - 15, 2024 December 12 - 14, 2025

Airport Holiday Inn, Des Moines

2024 AIF District Directors



Steve Voss – NW



Amanda Weber – NW



Jon Baltes - NC



Ann Schuster - NE



Mark Troester - NE



Ashley Fitzgerald – NC



Mary Bolton – SW



Danny Olson – SW



Roger Iverson - SC



Sherry James – SC



Dave Shinker - SE



Randy Beckman - SE

Iowa State Fair Board Elections

Iowa State Fair Board directors were elected during the State Agricultural Society meeting, held during the Conference.

Those elected as Directors to the Board include Darwin Gaudian of Primghar (NW District), Alan Brown of Hampton (NC District), John Harms of Monticello (NE District), CW Thomas of Guthrie Center (SW District), Randy Brown of Osceola (SC District), and Curt Claeys of Grand Mound (SE District).

Darwin Gaudian was elected as President of the Iowa State Fair Board for 2024. Curt Claeys will serve as Vice President and Deb Zumbach will be the Board Treasurer. Jeremy Parsons is the CEO/Manager of the Iowa State Fair.

AIF LEGISLATIVE SOCIAL

Thursday, April 4, 2024 – 11:30 a.m. to 1:30 p.m.
Iowa State Capitol, East Rotunda, 1st Floor.

This Social is a time to meet with our State Legislators to discuss state funding of our Fairs and other legislation that is beneficial to the fair industry in Iowa. All fair folks are invited to attend this special event. Your help is needed as you are asked to contact your legislators and ask their support on all the legislation the Association sponsors.

FROM THE OFFICE ...

It was good to see the great participation at your 2023 AIF Conference. I hope everyone enjoyed your Conference. Attendance for the Conference was up, meals counts were again strong, some of which were the highest we have seen the past several years. Everyone contributed to make the benefit auction a tremendous success, setting another record. The Conference is of no benefit to you unless you take some of the things learned at the Conference and implement them at your Fair. Every year the AIF Board strives to bring new topics and ideas to our member Fairs to help them improve, grow, and prosper. It is very gratifying to see quite a few new 'faces' serving on our fair boards in 2023. Keep this trend going in 2024.

As I have said many times, both Sue and I are proud to be a part of this Association. We are both honored for the opportunity to serve in the leadership role of the AIF. It is evident that our Iowa Fair folks are hardworking, dedicated and welcoming. This is most certainly evident when we visit your Fairs.

Our 2024 spring district meetings are coming up rather quickly, and our 'Fair Tour 2024' will begin in mid-June. Sue and I enjoy representing the AIF at the various meetings/events and we especially enjoy visiting Fairs. 'Thanks' to all for a successful 2023 and best wishes for a bigger and better 2024.

See you soon....



Your AIF Executive Director

Shift Down ... Pedal Down Make the Next Fair Your Best Fair!

The Fairman's Breakfast on Sunday morning featured Aaron Putze, well-known Central Iowa businessman, speaker, author and life coach. His presentation focused on fair folks using five



practical and actionable keys to shifting their fairs into a new gear.

He used life experiences as examples, encouraging fairs to use resources available to them to go from good to great ... albeit one gear, one turn, one decision, one relationship at a time.

His presentation was very well received by the capacity crowd.

Thank-You Thank-You Thank-You

To the following for sponsoring snacks, refreshments & coffee breaks.

Action Theater/Impact Pro Wrestling
Campbell Concessions, Edwards Marketing, Etix
Evans United Shows, G.L. Berg Entertainment
Grandstand Concerts, Iowa Communities Assurance Pool
Iowa Monster Arm Wrestling, Iowa Sound/Go Stagestruck
Luehrs' Ideal Rides, Next Generation Shows
Prairie Event Supply, Scott Amusements
Spectrum Weather & Specialty Insurance
Thunder & Lightning Productions, Variety Attractions



ASSOCIATION BOARD ELECTIONS

Jon Baltes Elected AIF Board President



2024 Officers of the Association Board of Directors were elected at the Board's organizational meeting held on Sunday afternoon following the AIF Conference.

Jon Baltes of Hampton was elected as the 2024 President of the Board. Mary Bolton of Emerson will serve as the Board's 1st Vice President and Mark Troester of Elkader will be the Board's 2nd Vice President. The immediate Past

President of the Board is Danny Olson of Red Oak.

In addition to Board Officer elections, Tom & Sue Barnes of Cresco were retained by the Board as the AIF's Executive Director and Executive Secretary/Treasurer.

AIF District Director elections were held at the fall district meetings and ratified at the AIF's Annual Meeting held during the Conference.

Elected to the AIF Board for a 2-year term include Amanda Weber of Sac City in Sac County (NW District), Ashley Fitzgerald of Boone in Boone County (NC District), Mark Troester of Elkader in Clayton County (NE District), Mary Bolton of Emerson in Mills County (SW District), Sherry James of Perry in Dallas County (SC District) and Dave Shinker of Stanwood in Cedar County (SE District).



2023
Blue Ribbon Award

Northwest District

**LYON
COUNTY FAIR**

Rock Rapids

2023
Blue Ribbon
Award

North Central
District

**HAMILTON
COUNTY FAIR**
Webster City



2023
Blue Ribbon Award

Northeast District

**LINN
COUNTY FAIR**

Central City



**2023
Blue Ribbon Award**

Southwest District

**CARROLL
COUNTY FAIR**

Coon Rapids



**2023
Blue Ribbon Award**

Southeast District

**JEFFERSON
COUNTY FAIR**

Fairfield



**2023
Blue Ribbon
Award**

*South Central
District*

**SOUTHERN
IOWA FAIR**

Oskaloosa





