



*Serving Iowa Fairs Since 1907*

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**Preliminary**

# 2026 CONFERENCE & ANNUAL MEETING

**DECEMBER 10 - 13, 2026**

**AIRPORT HOLIDAY INN CONFERENCE CENTER  
6111 FLEUR DRIVE, DES MOINES, IOWA**

**Conference Registration – Iowa Foyer**

**FRIDAY: 8:30 a.m. to 6:00 p.m.    SATURDAY: 8:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m.    SUNDAY: 8:00 a.m. to 11:00 a.m.**

*Thank You    Thank You    Thank You*

*--- To the following Conference Sponsors ---*

*Conference Badge Lanyards Provided by Etix & fairs.com*

*Absolute Science - Artists & Attractions*

*Evans United Shows – Gotcha Games - Grandstand Concerts*

*Haas & Wilkerson Insurance – Impact Pro Wrestling*

*Iowa Communities Assurance Pool (ICAP)*

*Luehrs' Ideal Rides - Monster Arm Wrestling*

*National Tractor Pullers Assn. - Prairie Event Supply - Scott Amusements*

*Spectrum Weather & Specialty Insurance – T&C Rodeo - Variety Attractions*

*Schedule is subject to Change. Updated October 23, 2026*

**THURSDAY - DECEMBER 10 -- 7:00 p.m. - Iowa A**

## **Pre-Conference Mixer**



Hey all AIF Fair members and Associate members ... Join us for a casual and fun evening of games! Connect with other AIF members, challenge your musical knowledge with 'Belt It Out Bingo', and see how you stack up with the others with 'Majority Rules'. It's the perfect way to unwind and get to know your AIF members. This mixer isn't just about winning; it's about building relationships and sharing a few laughs along the way. Bring your game face for an unforgettable evening.



**FRIDAY - DECEMBER 11**

**9:30 a.m. - Iowa A**

## **Association's Opening Business Meeting**

Association President Mark Troester will preside. Introductions, appointment of committees, and related business.

**10:00 a.m. - Iowa A**

# **Conference Welcome**

**Trina Flack**

**President & CEO, Catch Des Moines**

**CATCH  
DES MOINES**

**10:30 a.m. - Iowa B/C**

## **Social & Charitable Gambling**



AIF Host:

**Presenter: Dan Horner**

Unit Chief, Health & Safety Division



Dan's workshop will focus on the licensing, procedures and reporting of raffles, bingo and games of chance that county fair would need to hold raffles, games of chance and related.

**10:30 a.m. - Iowa A**

AIF Host:

This workshop will feature an interactive discussion on three topics that are pertinent to Fairs. Each topic will have 20 minutes of discussion time. The host will start the discussion on each topic and then monitor the open discussion from workshop attendees.



**Topics of discussion include:**

***Livestock Auctions; Emergency Plan; Facility Rentals***

**11:00 a.m. to 6:00 p.m.**

**Associate Member Rooms/Courtyard Tables are open for business.**

***Note: Associate members may be available for business outside of the hours posted.***

**1:00 p.m. – Room 397**

## **Conference Newcomer**

AIF Host:

First time attending the AIF Conference? This session will guide you through the 'ins and outs' of the Conference.

Friday continued ...

**1:30 p.m. - Iowa D/E**

## ***Quest For The Crown***

AIF Host:

Presenters:

Unlike traditional glamour pageants, Iowa county fair queen contests emphasize personality, poise, leadership, community involvement, and agricultural representation rather than just physical appearance.

Discussion in this workshop will focus on how Fairs conduct a queen contest and share ideas that Fairs can use to change how they select their queen.



**1:30 p.m. - Iowa A**

## ***Food Service Guidelines For Fairs***

AIF Host:

Presenter: **Julie Kraling**

Food and Consumer Safety Bureau,  
Iowa Department of Inspections & Appeals

A review of current food service procedures, licensing and food safety guidelines.



Temporary Food Establishments

**1:30 p.m. - Iowa B/C**

## ***Accounting Basics for County Fairs***

AIF Host:

Presenter: **TBD**

Office of the Auditor, State of Iowa

This workshop will include instruction on best banking practices for county fairs. This workshop will take attendees through a fundamental review of proper procedures for the financial administration of a county fair, such as board members, managers, and treasurers.



**1:30 p.m. - Westview Room**

## ***Economic Impact Studies and How to Use Them***

Turning Economic Impact Data into Actionable information

AIF Host:

Presenters: **John Flemming and Brandon Dowling**  
**Johnson Consulting, Chicago IL**

How can we turn economic impact data into actionable information? Join Johnson Consulting, the team behind IAFE's 2024 national economic & fiscal impact study for the fairs & fairgrounds industry in the United States, as they dive into all things economic impact.

This presentation will translate the methodology, assumptions, and terminology associated with economic & fiscal impacts into plain English and equip you with the tools you need to explain the data and use it to advocate for your fair and fairgrounds.

**2:30 p.m. - Meeting Room 397**

***Iowa Foundation for Agriculture Advancement Annual Meeting***

**3:00 p.m. - Iowa B/C**

## ***Alcohol Licensing & Sales***

AIF Host:

Presenters: **Nate Bayer, Tiffney Brown, Dustin Paulsen**

Iowa Alcoholic Beverage Division

Licensing, beverage service practices and current laws pertaining to alcohol service will be covered.



**3:00 p.m. - Iowa D/E**

## ***Building a Culture for Highly Effective Volunteers***

AIF Host:

Presenter: **Kyle Palmer, Artists & Attractions**



Finding volunteers is hard. Keeping great volunteers can be even harder. And sometimes the biggest problem isn't a lack of people, it's having the wrong people in the wrong places.

This session explores recruiting, retention, accountability, communication, leadership, and how AI can help identify the right people for the right roles.

**All Persons attending Conference must register.**

***2026 Conference badges required for admission to all functions.***

***Cell phones are to be set to 'silence mode' or turned off during sessions and events.***

**'Resource Tables' located in Ballroom Foyer**

***Fairs are asked to share premium books, posters, fair swag, advertising et al.***

**12.11.26**  
**4PM - 5PM**

**OPEN BAR & LIVE MUSIC!**  
AT THE AIRPORT HOLIDAY INN

ASSOCIATION OF IOWA FAIRS CONFERENCE

# HONKY TONK HAPPY HOUR

COMPLIMENTARY BEVERAGES & SPECIAL ACOUSTIC PERFORMANCE  
BY NASHVILLE RECORDING ARTIST  
**CONWAY TURLEY**

**OPEN TO ALL CONFERENCE ATTENDEES**



**SPECTRUM**  
Member of the University of Iowa System

**GRANDSTAND**  
CONCERTS

**TRINER & BUCHHEIM**  
PRODUCTIONS

## ***Awards Banquet - Iowa Hall***

Honoring "Fairman of the Year", Showman of the Year", "Blue Ribbon Fairs",  
Hall of Fame Inductees and Scholarship Winners.

**Doors Open at 5:30 p.m.; Meal Served at 5:45 p.m.**

**Member Recognition & Awards Program Following the Meal**

*Ticket is required for the meal – must be purchased prior to Conference*

### ***2026 'BLUE RIBBON FAIR' AWARDS***

Blue Ribbon Fair displays located in Iowa Foyer

|                        |                         |                   |
|------------------------|-------------------------|-------------------|
| Northwest District     | Sioux County Youth Fair | Sioux Center      |
| North Central District | Winnebago County Fair   | Thompson          |
| Northeast District     | Fayette County Fair     | West Union        |
| Southwest District     | Monona County Fair      | Onawa             |
| South Central District | Union County Fair       | Afton             |
| Southeast District     | Lousia County Fair      | Columbus Junction |

***8:00 p.m. to 10:30 p.m. - Ballroom***

## ***Entertainment Live Showcasing***

*Showcasing Details on Page 10*

## SATURDAY - DECEMBER 12

8:00 a.m. - Ballroom South

### **Associate Members Breakfast & Business Meeting**

Ticket required to eat breakfast – must be purchased prior to Conference. Ticket is not required to attend the meeting.

*Special 'Thank You' to Luehrs Ideal Rides For Sponsoring the  
Associate Members Breakfast*



**Keynote Speaker - 8:30 a.m. - Iowa A**

## **Patrick Kirby**

*Husband, Dad, Speaker, Author, Do Gooder,  
and Loather of the phrase "We've always done it that way."*

## **Lead Like a 5th Grader**

*Lead with Curiosity, Not Complexity*

*Sometimes, a company's culture and business growth can feel like they're in completely different worlds—but they share one critical element: success comes from bold, fearless, and resilient action. In this engaging and fun keynote, Patrick Kirby shows how the fearless mindset of 5th graders—asking big questions, embracing curiosity, and failing forward—can be applied directly to leadership, business development, and team culture.*

*Through relatable stories and actionable strategies, attendees will learn how to think creatively, build authentic relationships, and pursue ambitious goals with confidence. Whether leading a business, nonprofit, or team, this keynote inspires a fresh, fearless approach to growth and collaboration.*



#### **Will Walk Away With:**

- ✓ *Strategies to lead boldly, make confident decisions, and embrace creativity in problem-solving*
- ✓ *Tools to build resilience, bounce back from setbacks, and pivot with confidence*
- ✓ *Techniques to foster collaboration, strengthen team communication, and cultivate a winning culture*
- ✓ *A renewed sense of courage and curiosity to tackle challenges and pursue ambitious goals*

**Saturday 9:00 a.m. to 4:00 p.m.**

*Silent auction items will be displayed in Iowa Foyer Area.*

*Silent Auction results announced at 6:30 p.m.  
just prior to the live auction.*

***Silent Auction Closes at 4:00 p.m. Sharp!!***

**Posting Conference photos or comments to Social Media?  
Tag #iowafairs in your posts.**

Saturday continued ....

**10:00 a.m. - Meeting Room 396 -- Carnival Owners Meeting**

**10:00 a.m. - Meeting Room 397 -- Iowa Harness Horse Association Meeting**

**10:00 a.m. to 6:00 p.m.**

**Associate Member Rooms/Courtyard Tables are open for business.**

*Note: Associate members may be available for business outside of the hours posted.*

**11:30 a.m. to 12:45 p.m. – Ballroom South**

**Box Lunch Served**

Ticket required. Lunch may be taken to other areas of the Conference Center.

**11:30 a.m. to 1:30 p.m. - Ballroom**

**Associate Member Introductions & Non-Music Act Showcase**

**Saturday Workshops – Times as Noted**

**10:00 a.m. - Iowa A**

### **Livestock Updates**

Youth Shows, Check-in/Weigh-in Procedures, & State of Iowa  
Livestock Show Regulations

AIF Host:



Presenters:

**Dr. Jeff Kaisand, State Veterinarian**

**Celine Beggs-Shoemaker, ISU 4-H Animal Science Specialist**



Dr Jeff & Celine will lead a discussion focusing on State of Iowa regulations relating to the exhibition of animals at a county fair, public health issues and concerns, proper animal presentations, responsibilities of a



county fair and ethical practices by exhibitors and families.

**10:00 a.m. - Ballroom North**

### **Swipe, Tap, Send**

**Your Guide to Everyday Digital Payments**

AIF Host:

Presenter:

Are you ready to maximize your sales at your county fair? As more attendees leave their cash at home, offering digital payment options is no longer just a convenience - it is a necessity for your business. This practical, hands-on workshop is designed specifically for fair vendors, concessionaires, and organizers looking to transition into or optimize cashless transactions.

This session will break down the most popular and reliable payment methods available today, including traditional debit and credit cards, mobile apps like Venmo and PayPal, and dedicated point-of-sale systems like Square. Whether you are setting up digital payments for the first time or looking to streamline your existing checkout process, this session will give you the tools and confidence to accept payments quickly and securely.



**10:00 a.m. - Iowa B/C**



**The APP**

AIF Host:

Presenter: **Ian Hill, CEO of The Changing Point**

The YMTD App is built to support, equip, and connect grassroots leaders, fair board members, agricultural society organizers, and rural community volunteers across North America. It addresses volunteer shortages and aging leadership by helping communities preserve local institutions, fairs, and rural engagement.

**10:00 a.m. - Iowa D/E**

### **County Fair Security 101**

**Best Practices for a Safe Event**

AIF Host:

Presenter: **Randy Jones, Chief of Police, Iowa State Fair**

A county fair is a cherished tradition, bringing together the community for fun and celebration.

This workshop is designed for county fair staff, board members, vendors, and volunteers, addressing key safety and security considerations to help prevent accidents and manage incidents effectively.

Participants will learn best practices to create a safer environment for fairgoers and to prepare their teams to respond confidently to a range of potential situations.



## Secretary/Manager Workshops

Noon – Iowa B/C

### **Paid Secretary/Managers Workshop**

AIF Host:

The Secretary/Manager workshop will focus on the responsibilities of those people serving as the secretary and/or manager of their county fair. New for 2026 is the workshop is split into two sessions. One session will focus on a volunteer position and one for paid position. Topics of discussion include board and committee meeting minutes, board correspondence, assisting board treasurer, meeting agendas, agent of the board and other areas of responsibility. Audience participation is encouraged.

Attendees are welcome to bring their lunch to their workshop.

Noon – Iowa D/E

### **Volunteer Secretary/Manager Workshop**

AIF Host:

1:30 p.m. - Iowa A



AIF Host:

Presenter: **Patrick Kirby**

***What's Your Fundraising Strategy Missing? Probably a Little Bit of Fun...and a Whole Lot of Awesome!***



Patrick Kirby is what happens when you mix equal parts fundraising expertise, caffeinated enthusiasm, and an unshakable belief that nonprofits deserve better than burnout and budget gaps. As the Founder of Do Good Better Consulting, Patrick has made it his life's mission to help nonprofits fundraise smarter, build stronger donor relationships, and actually enjoy asking for money (yes, really).

He's the author of the Amazon bestsellers *Fundraise Awesomer! A Practical Guide to Staying Sane While Doing Good* & *Fundraise Like a 5th Grader*, host of *The Official Do Good Better Podcast*, and loather of the phrase "we've always done it that way."

Patrick's fundraising street cred comes from nearly two decades in the trenches, including his time as Senior Director of Development at the Cystic Fibrosis Foundation and Chief Development Officer at the Anne Carlsen Center. He's worked with organizations of every shape and size, helping them raise millions without losing their minds in the process.

1:30 p.m. – Iowa B/C

## **Mastering Fairgrounds Campground Management**

AIF Host:

Presenters: **Boone County Fair**



County fairgrounds face unique challenges when transforming open spaces into seasonal, high-density campgrounds. Whether you are managing hundreds of hookups during fair week or hosting weekend

rallies throughout the off-season, efficient operations are key to profitability and guest safety.

This interactive workshop provides fair managers and operations staff with practical strategies to optimize their campground layout, streamline reservations, and maintain regulatory compliance. Participants will learn how to maximize revenue while ensuring a smooth, safe experience for every camper.

1:30 p.m. - Iowa D/E

## **Engage, Entertain, Educate**

**Elevating the Family Fair Experience**

AIF Host:

How do you transform a traditional county fair into a must-visit destination for modern families? The secret lies in designing dynamic, safe, and unforgettable Kids Zones and family-centered activities. This interactive workshop is designed for all fair organizers, board members, and special event planners who want to elevate their fair's family appeal.

Participants will explore strategies for curating a diverse mix of attractions—ranging from hands-on agricultural education exhibits and sensory-friendly zones to interactive entertainment and budget-friendly DIY play areas. Learn from testimonials from Fairs that have successful family-friendly activities and Kid's Zones that keeps families on the fairgrounds longer.



3:00 p.m. – Ballroom North

## ***Your Fair Needs a 20-Year Vision***

AIF Host:

Presenter: Kyle Palmer, Artists & Attractions

Most fairs spend enormous amounts of time planning next year but very little time planning the next twenty years.



This session helps boards think strategically about facilities, finances, leadership succession, changing demographics, traditions, revenue sources, and what they want their fair to become.

3:00 p.m. – Ballroom South

## ***Partners Who Come Back***

*What's Working with Vendors and Sponsors*

AIF Host:

Presenter:

Every fair runs on partners. From vendors who feed your fairgoers to sponsors who fund your stages, every partner comes back only when it pays off. Keeping vendors and sponsors happy takes different playbooks, and this session covers both. We spoke to fairs across the country about what's working on each side.

On the vendor side: curating your mix instead of just filling space, building an application process you can stand behind, structuring deposits, and running settlements without burning relationships. On the sponsor side: building packages they want to buy, delivering on every commitment, and showing them the value so they return.

You'll leave with practical ideas you can hand to your vendor and sponsor teams right away. Bring whoever handles each. We'll close with a look at the back-office work behind all of this and how to take some of it off your team's plate.



4:00 p.m. - Ballroom North

## **PROFESSIONALS SOCIAL & NETWORKING**

*Open to persons under 40 years of age that are actively involved with their fair.*

Host: Abby Jaeger, IAFE Zone 5 YP Representative & Office Manager, Great Jones County Fair

*Stop in and enjoy networking with your fellow colleagues...*

The IAFE's Young Professionals (YP) is comprised of dozens of under 40-year-old fair industry leaders who are passionate about the progression and growth of fairs for the future. In addition to providing professional development, networking, and educational opportunities for its members, YP serves as a channel for idea sharing and furthering relationships among fair leaders across the U.S. and Canada.



5:30 p.m. - Iowa Hall

## ***Social A' Fair & Auction***

***Food served from 5:30 p.m. to 6:45 p.m.***

***Ticket required to eat at Social.***

***Silent Auction results announced at 6:00 p.m.***

***Live Auction starts at 6:15 p.m.***



***... All Are Invited to Dress to the 2026 Theme ...***



***Red, White and Blue - Celebrate America 250***

***Social A'Fair Menu Features Several All-American Fair Food Favorites***

***Mac & Cheese Bar ... BBQ Pulled Pork Sandwiches ... Hot Dogs***

***Super Nachoes ... Chicken Tenders ... Potato Salad***

***Apple Crisp with Ice Cream ... Popcorn ... Lemonade ... Beer Tent***

***All AIF members are encouraged to participate in the Auction.***

Saturday continued ...

8:30 p.m. – Room 397

## ***AIF President's Reception***

Hosts: AIF Board President Mark Troester and members of the Clayton County Fair Board

**SUNDAY - DECEMBER 13**

7:30 a.m. - Ballroom

### ***All-Faiths Worship Service***

Open to all faiths. Service in memory of deceased Fair Board members.

Leroy Perkins, Wayne County, Minister

8:00 a.m. - Iowa A

### ***Fairman's Breakfast***

Ticket required - AIF Host: Ann Schuster

9:30 a.m. - Iowa A

### **Association of Iowa Fairs Annual Meeting**

*Presiding: Mark Troester, President, Association of Iowa Fair Board of Directors*

10:30 a.m. - Iowa A

### **State Agricultural Convention**

*Presiding: Curtis Claeys, President, Iowa State Fair Board of Directors*

***Attendance is required at both annual meetings.***

***— End of 2026 AIF Conference & Annual Meeting —***

***Future AIF Conference & Annual Meeting Date***

***December 9 to 12, 2027 at the Airport Holiday Inn, Des Moines***

#### ***Meeting Rooms Available to Fair Boards***

*Rooms 298 and 398 are available for Fair Boards to use as a meeting location to discuss proposed entertainment, workshop ideas or any other business. Not required to reserve a time to use a room.*

*Be courteous of others using the rooms.*

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#### ***'Resource Tables' located in Ballroom Foyer***

*Fairs are asked to share premium books, posters, fair swag, advertising et al.*

## Entertainment Live Showcasing

### 2026 AIF Conference Entertainment Showcasing

Friday Evening, December 11 - Ballroom

8:00 p.m. - Opening Remarks; Showcasing - 8:10 p.m. to 10:30 p.m. (Schedule is subject to change)

| TIME       | ACT                                                                   | REPRESENTED BY                               | MUSIC GENRE                     | AGENCY WEBSITE                                                                               | ARTIST SOCIAL MEDIA or YOUTUBE VIDEO                                                                                                                        |
|------------|-----------------------------------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------|---------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 8:10 p.m.  | Adam Calvert                                                          | Adam Calvert Music<br>Courtyard Table        | Country                         | <a href="https://adamcalvertmusic.com/">https://adamcalvertmusic.com/</a>                    | <a href="https://www.facebook.com/adamcalvertmusic">https://www.facebook.com/adamcalvertmusic</a>                                                           |
| 8:30 p.m.  | Nathan Bryce's<br>SRV Experience A<br>Tribute to<br>Stevie Ray Vaughn | Triangle Talent<br>Room 120                  | Blues & Rock<br>Tribute         | <a href="http://www.triangletalent.com/">http://www.triangletalent.com/</a>                  | <a href="https://nathanbrycesrv.com/">https://nathanbrycesrv.com/</a>                                                                                       |
| 8:50 p.m.  | Conway Turley                                                         | Grandstand<br>Concerts<br>Room 160           | Country                         | <a href="http://www.grandstandconcerts.com/">http://www.grandstandconcerts.com/</a>          | <a href="https://www.facebook.com/conway.turley.1/">https://www.facebook.com/conway.turley.1/</a>                                                           |
| 9:10 p.m.  | Mike Moody &<br>the Outlaws                                           | Bobby Baker<br>Entertainment<br>Room 182     | 80's, 90's &<br>2000's Rock     | <a href="http://www.bobbybakerentertainment.com/">www.bobbybakerentertainment.com/</a>       | <a href="https://www.facebook.com/p/Mike-Moody-and-The-Outlaws-100076265833842/">https://www.facebook.com/p/Mike-Moody-and-The-Outlaws-100076265833842/</a> |
| 9:30 p.m.  | Jessica Loobey                                                        | Liz Gregory<br>Productions<br>Room 102       | Country                         | <a href="http://www.gregorytalentandproductions.com">www.gregorytalentandproductions.com</a> | <a href="https://jessicaloobey.com/">https://jessicaloobey.com/</a>                                                                                         |
| 9:50 p.m.  | Members Only                                                          | Variety<br>Attractions<br>Room 358           | 80's Tribute<br>Rock and<br>Pop | <a href="http://www.varietyattractons.com">www.varietyattractons.com</a>                     | <a href="https://www.membersonlytribute.com/">https://www.membersonlytribute.com/</a>                                                                       |
| 10:10 p.m. | Jordan Isakson                                                        | Stage West<br>Productions<br>Courtyard Table | Country                         | <a href="http://www.stagewestentertainment.com">www.stagewestentertainment.com</a>           | <a href="https://jordanisakson.com/">https://jordanisakson.com/</a>                                                                                         |