Serving Iowa Fairs Since 1907

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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 - 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 November 6, 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

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

Social & Charitable Gambling



AIF Host: Roger Iverson

***Presenter:* Dan Horner**

Unit Chief, Health & Safety Division

Department of Inspections, Appeals, & Licensing

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: Dave Shinker

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: Tom Barnes

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

Cash, Card, or Tap?

Choosing the Right Payment Options

AIF Host: Steve Voss

Presenter: ***Diana Kern, AAP***

Sr. Financial Solutions Consultant, SHAZAM



Fairgoers want to pay the easiest way possible, and the payment options open to vendors differ widely in cost, speed, and reliability. This presentation compares common choices, including card readers, mobile wallets, and QR code payments. It also covers equipment and setup requirements, possible connectivity problems on crowded fairgrounds, and how fast vendors get paid. You'll leave with practical guidance you can share with your vendors to help them have a smooth, profitable 2027 season.

1:30 p.m. - Iowa A

Food Service Guidelines For Fairs

AIF Host: Jon Baltes

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.

Iowa Department of INSPECTIONS & APPEALS

Temporary Food Establishments

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

Accounting Basics for County Fairs

AIF Host: Mary Bolton

Presenter: ***Selina Johnson***

Office of the Auditor, State of Iowa

As a fair board member, your fiduciary responsibility goes beyond simply approving the annual budget; it requires a proactive commitment to transparency, internal controls, and risk management. Because county fairs operate with a unique blend of public funds, donor contributions, gate receipts, and vendor fees, implementing rigorous oversight practices is vital to protecting public trust and securing the financial health of your agricultural society.

1:30 p.m. – Westview Room

The Numbers Behind the Fair

Turning Economic Impact Data into Actionable information

AIF Host: Sherry James

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: Ann Schuster

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

Iowa Alcoholic Beverage Division

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

State of Iowa ALCOHOLIC BEVERAGES DIVISION

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

Building a Culture for Highly Effective Volunteers

AIF Host: Ashley Fitzgerald

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

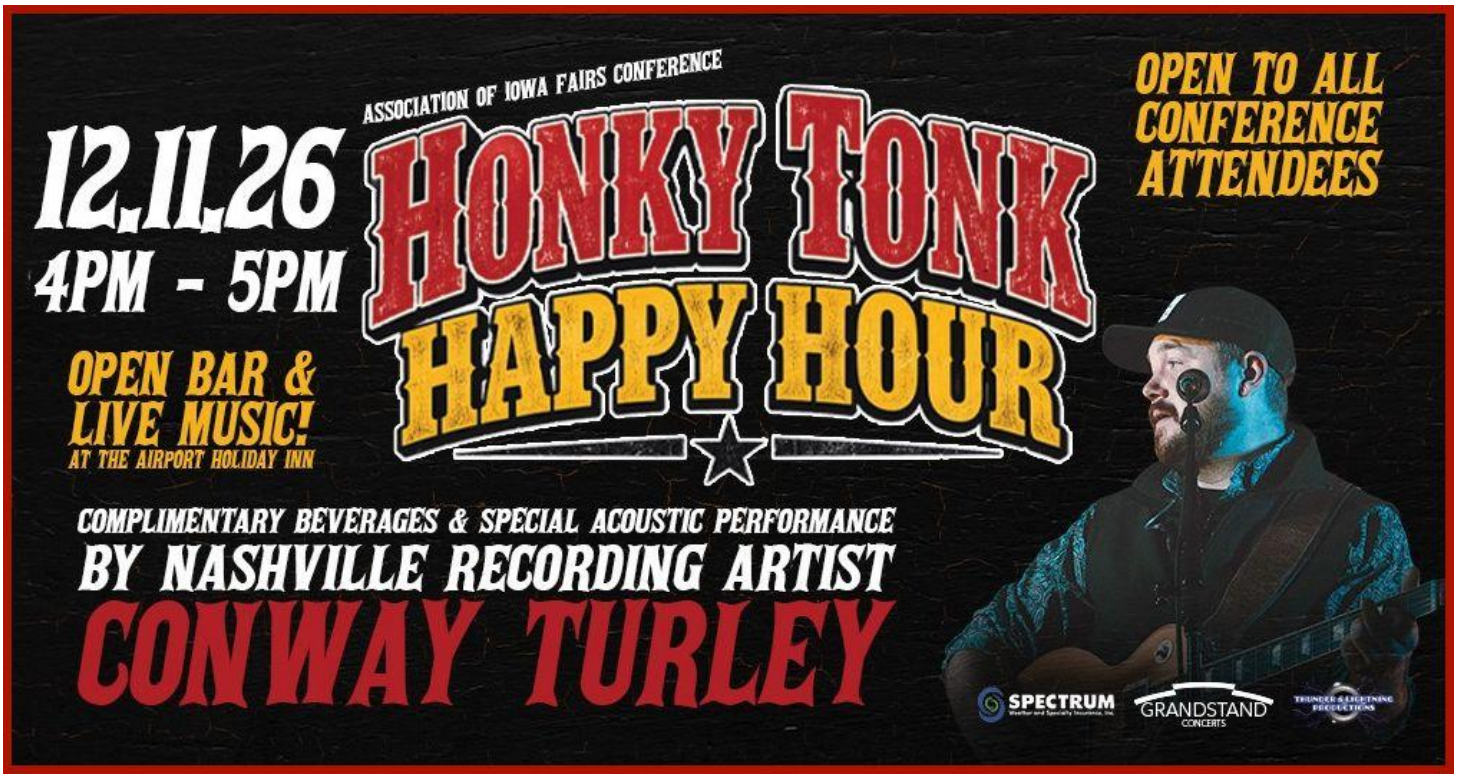


Finding volunteers is hard. Keeping great volunteers can be even harder. And sometimes the biggest problem isn't a lack of people, it's having the wrong people in the wrong places. This session explores recruiting, retention, accountability, communication, leadership, and how AI can help identify the right people for the right roles.

All Persons attending Conference must register. 2026 Conference badges required for admission to all functions.

'Resource Tables' -- Ballroom Foyer

Fairs are asked to share premium books, posters, fair swag, advertising, etc.



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: Kurt Dallmeyer

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. - Iowa B/C



The APP

AIF Host: Amanda Weber

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.

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

Quest For The Crown

AIF Host: Ashley Fitzgerald

Presenters: ***Abby Jaeger & Mikinze Smith***

Great Jones County Fair

Morgan Wagner & Allison McGuire

Kossuth County Fair



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.

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

County Fair Security 101

Best Practices for a Safe Event

AIF Host: Dave Shinker

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.



Saturday continued ….

Secretary/Manager Workshops

Noon – Iowa B/C

Paid Secretary/Managers Workshop

Facilitator: Jeannie Domeyer, Delaware County Fair

Noon – Iowa D/E

Volunteer Secretary/Manager Workshop

Facilitator: Amanda Weber, Sac County Fair

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.

1:30 p.m. - Iowa A



AIF Host: Jon Baltes

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: Ashley Fitzgerald

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: Ann Schuster

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: Danny Olson

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: Roger Iverson

Presenter: ***Dakota Romine,*** ***Director of Partnerships, fairs.com***

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

iafe YOUNG PROFESSIONALS SOCIAL & NETWORKING



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

Facilitator: ***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
Caucus Locations: NE District, Iowa A; NC District, Iowa B/C; NW District, Ballroom Central
SE District, Ballroom North; SC District, Iowa D/E; SW District, Ballroom South

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.

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.

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 Courtyard Table	Country	https://adamcalvertmusic.com/	https://www.facebook.com/adamcalvertmusic
8:30 p.m.	*Nathan Bryce's SRV Experience* *A Tribute to Stevie Ray Vaughn*	Triangle Talent Room 120	Blues & Rock Tribute	http://www.triangletalent.com/	https://nathanbrycesrv.com/
8:50 p.m.	*Conway Turley*	Grandstand Concerts Courtyard Table	Country	http://www.grandstandconcerts.com/	https://www.facebook.com/conway.turley.1/
9:10 p.m.	*Mike Moody & the Outlaws*	Bobby Baker Entertainment Room 182	80's, 90's & 2000's Rock	www.bobbybakerentertainment.com/	https://www.facebook.com/p/Mike-Moody-and-The-Outlaws-100076265833842/
9:30 p.m.	*Jessica Loobey*	Liz Gregory Productions Room 102	Country	www.gregorytalentandproductions.com	https://jessicaloobey.com/
9:50 p.m.	*Members Only*	Variety Attractions Room 358	80's Tribute Rock and Pop	www.varietyattractions.com	https://www.membersonlytribute.com/
10:10 p.m.	*Jordan Isakson*	Stage West Productions Courtyard Table	Country	www.stagewestentertainment.com	https://jordanisakson.com/