

MINNESOTA STATE FAIR

NEWS RELEASE

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Nearly \$20 Million in Fairgrounds Improvements Approved for 2019

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MINNESOTA STATE FAIRGROUNDS – Nearly \$20 million in improvements and maintenance projects for the Minnesota State Fairgrounds were approved by the fair’s board of managers during meetings Jan. 18-20. The meetings were part of the annual joint conventions of the Minnesota State Agricultural Society (governing body of the State Fair), Minnesota Federation of County Fairs and Midwest Showmen’s Association at the DoubleTree Hotel in Bloomington. The board approved \$16.3 million in capital work - \$16 million of which is earmarked for a major new exhibit complex on the North End of the fairgrounds, as well as \$3.4 million in maintenance projects.

During the meeting, State Fair General Manager Jerry Hammer previewed the North End development, which is currently under construction on the fairgrounds. The centerpiece of the State Fair’s newest neighborhood is a major new exhibit facility with a 12,000-square-foot exhibit hall that will be the fair-time home to annually changing museum-quality exhibits. The North End will also have features that recognize Minnesota innovations in agriculture, industry and the arts, along with uniquely Minnesota attractions, food and commercial exhibits.

Improvements and maintenance projects approved for the coming year include: upgrades to the stalling and technology equipment in the Swine Barn, installation of a new overhead cover for the Exercise Ring in the livestock area, improvements to the restrooms in Lee & Rose Warner Coliseum, upgrades to the lighting and fire suppression system in the DNR Building, and dozens of paint, sewer, street and sidewalk and landscape projects throughout the 322-acre State Fairgrounds. All projects will be funded through State Fair operating revenue and grants from the Minnesota State Fair Foundation. The fair is financially self-supporting and receives no government aid of any kind.

The fair’s board of managers also approved admission prices for the 2019 fair, Aug. 22 through Labor Day, Sept. 2. Regular gate admission for adults 13-64 will be \$15; kids 5-12 and seniors 65+ will be admitted for \$13; children 4 and under are always admitted free. Pre-fair discount admission tickets on sale through Aug. 21 for all ages will be \$12. The admission fees represent a \$1 increase in each category and will take effect Feb. 2. Admission prices were last adjusted two years ago. Pre-fair discount admission tickets are on sale at the 2018 discount price of \$11 for all ages through Feb. 1. Hammer cited rising costs in fair production, facilities upkeep, public safety, and other services such as the free Park & Ride system for the increase. “We work hard to provide the very best in agriculture, art, entertainment and guest services.”

In other business conducted during the meeting, **Paul Merkins of Stewart** was re-elected to a second one-year term as president of the Society. **Joe Fox of Maplewood** was re-elected to a two-year term as State Fair board vice president, representing the Society’s fourth regional district. **Jeff Hawkins of Inver Grove Heights** and **Ron Oleheiser of Grand Rapids** were each re-elected to three-year terms representing the Society’s second and eighth districts respectively.

Retired Executive Director of the Minnesota State Fair Foundation Kay Cady was inducted as the newest member of the Minnesota State Fair Hall of Fame. The fair’s Hall of Fame was founded in 1966 to recognize individuals whose outstanding service has had a lasting impact on the Great Minnesota Get-Together. Induction into the Hall of Fame is the State Fair’s highest honor. Cady served as executive director from 2004 through 2017 when, over those last three years, grants to the Minnesota State Fair exceeded \$1 million annually. Thousands of State Fair fans have become Foundation Friends of the Fair – a program she founded – contributing to operations, capital campaigns, endowments and special programs. Some of the projects Cady brought to fruition were improvements to the J.V. Bailey House and Warner Coliseum, and construction of the CHS Miracle of Birth Center and FFA Chapter House, Compeer Arena (formerly AgStar Arena), the History & Heritage Center and Schilling Amphitheater.

Retired Minnesota State Fair Veterinarian Dr. Thomas J. Hagerty was elected to honorary life membership in the Society for his service as State Fair Veterinarian from 2001 to 2017. Hagerty was born and raised on a livestock farm in Waseca County and graduated from the University of Minnesota’s College of Veterinary Medicine in 1959. He served as the State Veterinarian for the Minnesota Board of Animal Health from 1984 to 2001 and had a general veterinary practice in St. Michael, Minn., for 25 years. He also served as president of the Minnesota Veterinary Medical Association (MVMA), chair of the MVMA Government Affairs Committee, and president of the United States Animal Health Association, among others. His significant contributions to public health and regulatory veterinary medicine span six decades.

The State Agricultural Society is made up of delegates from each of the state’s 87 county fairs, plus representatives of 43 statewide associations involved in agriculture, horticulture and education. The Society is a quasi-state agency charged exclusively with the production of the annual Minnesota State Fair and management of the historic 322-acre State Fairgrounds.

The Minnesota State Fair is one of the largest and best-attended expositions in the world, attracting more than 2 million visitors annually. Showcasing Minnesota’s finest agriculture, art and industry, the Great Minnesota Get-Together is always 12 Days of Fun Ending Labor Day. Visit mnstatefair.org for more information. The 2019 Minnesota State Fair runs Aug. 22 - Labor Day, Sept. 2.

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