

# MINNESOTA STATE FAIR

## NEWS RELEASE

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### Minnesota State Agricultural Society's Board of Managers Votes for No Admission Price Increase for 2024

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St. Paul, Minn. – During the 165<sup>th</sup> Annual Meeting of the Minnesota State Agricultural Society, the State Fair's board of managers approved that admission prices will not increase in 2024, and \$10.2 million is budgeted for maintenance projects and capital work this year. The Society is the governing body of the State Fair, and its annual meeting was held Jan. 12-14 at the DoubleTree Hotel by Hilton in Bloomington.

Regular gate admission will remain the same as it was in 2023: Adults 13-64 are \$18; kids 5-12 and seniors 65+ are \$16; children 4 and under are always admitted free. Pre-fair discount admission tickets are \$15 and currently on sale. For a complete list of pricing and to purchase tickets, visit [mnstatefair.org/tickets/](http://mnstatefair.org/tickets/)

Maintenance projects and capital work approved for 2024 include installation of new windows and doors in the Fine Arts Center; upgrades to the Kidway lot; construction of a new ticket office outside the Grandstand; installation of new doors and additional fans in the Horse Barn; upgrade to the fiber optic system; safety and security investments; tree care and landscaping; purchase of additional bike racks; installation of water fill stations; improvements to outdoor lighting; addition of shade umbrellas to Dan Patch Park; east Grandstand elevator work; and miscellaneous paint, electrical, roofing, ventilation, sewer, street and sidewalk projects throughout the 322-acre State Fairgrounds. All projects are funded through State Fair operating income and grants from the Minnesota State Fair Foundation. The fair is financially self-supporting and receives no government aid.

"The Great Minnesota Get-Together is proud to be an annual tradition for so many Minnesotans, partly because a day at the fair is such an incredible value," said State Fair CEO Renee Alexander. "In 2024, we are making it a priority to hold ticket prices the same while continuing to invest extensively in exceptional programming, guest experience enhancements, the historic fairgrounds and improvements to our operation."

In other business at the meeting, **Wally Wichmann** of Balaton, Minn., was elected president of the Society. **Steve Storck** of Morris, Minn., was elected to a three-year term representing the Society's seventh regional district vacated by Wichmann. **Kent Harbison** of Roseville, Minn., was elected to fill the remaining one-year term of the retiring Joe Fox's two-year term as State Fair board vice president representing the Society's fourth regional district. **Sara Donaldson** of Minneapolis was re-elected to a two-year term as State Fair board vice president representing the Society's fifth regional district. **Dan Grunhoyd** of Gary was re-elected to a three-year term representing the Society's ninth district.

Retired CEO **Jerry Hammer** is one of this year's Hall of Fame honorees. Growing up just blocks from the fairgrounds, Hammer's State Fair career spanned 53 years including 27 as general manager. He was the longest-serving leader in the 169-year-old institution's history. He spent nearly all his working life at the State Fair, starting in 1970 at the fair's greenhouse as a 15-year-old high school student. He joined the full-time staff in 1977 and served in a variety of positions in events, media, marketing, public relations and senior management before being named general manager in 1997. During his tenure, nearly \$180 million was invested in capital and maintenance work. Notable projects include renovating the century-old Grandstand, rebuilding the International Bazaar, constructing a new Miracle of Birth Center, establishing the Transportation Hub and West End Market, redeveloping the north end and building the North End Event Center, constructing AgStar Arena, and making numerous improvements to the livestock area and countless infrastructure upgrades – all with no public funding. Much was accomplished through the State

Fair's bonding authority along with the Minnesota State Fair Foundation – both launched during Hammer's first years as general manager. Hammer is also past chairman of International Association of Fairs & Expositions and Mid-West Fairs Association.

**Joe Fox**, retired Minnesota State Fair board vice president, representing the Society's fourth regional district, is also a Hall of Fame honoree this year. He was elected to the Minnesota State Agricultural Society in 1997 and held his position for 27 years. One of his most profound board contributions was his role in establishing the Minnesota State Fair Foundation in 2002. As a youth, he participated in 4-H by exhibiting swine and dairy cattle at the county level, earning many trips to the Minnesota State Fair. Fox earned his bachelor's and master's degrees in education and public administration from the University of Minnesota. After serving 37 years as a faculty member, he retired in 1992 from U of M Extension as professor emeritus. His lifelong work in and around fairs includes serving as a 4-H agent in Hennepin County, as 4-H and 4-H agriculture agent in Ramsey County, as district supervisor in east central and southeast Minnesota, and as judge of 4-H exhibits at eight different county fairs. He retired as a district director in 1992. Beginning in 1966, he has served continuously on the Ramsey County fair board, primarily as the fair secretary and manager. Fox has been active in his Maplewood community for decades and involved with St. Paul East Parks Lions Club, Ramsey County Soil and Water Conservation Board, the District 622 Education Foundation, the Ramsey County Charter Commission and the Metropolitan Council's 208 Advisory Council.

Retiring Board President **Joe Scapanski** of Sauk Rapids, Minn., was elected to honorary life membership in the Society. Scapanski served on the State Fair board of managers since 2010 and was president in 2022 and 2023. He has farmed in Benton County since his youth. Besides farming, he has been a township supervisor for 30 years, a real estate broker for 35 years, and a member of the Central MN Arts board and the Minnesota Federation of County Fairs board. In high school he was an officer in FFA, which led to further involvement, including being a state vice president and traveling with a group of FFA members to Europe to learn more about other youth groups. He received the 2014 International Association of Fairs and Expositions' (IAFE) Heritage Award and is a graduate of IAFE's Institute of Fair Management.

The State Agricultural Society is made up of delegates from each of the state's county fairs, plus representatives of more than 40 statewide associations involved in agriculture, horticulture and education. The Society is 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. 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](http://mnstatefair.org) for more information. The 2024 Minnesota State Fair runs Aug. 22 - Labor Day, Sept. 2.

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