



**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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## **FROM GREAT TO GRAND: AKSARBEN STOCK SHOW FINDS NEW HOME IN GRAND ISLAND**

*Omaha, Neb.* (February 9, 2017) – AKSARBEN Foundation has announced a new partnership with the Grand Island Livestock Complex Authority and the relocation of the AKSARBEN Stock Show and Purple Ribbon Auction to Grand Island, NE beginning in 2017.

The \$42 million livestock facilities located at Fonner Park will host the event. Completed in 2012, the facilities include nearly 500,000 sq.ft. of state-of-the-art exhibition, livestock and equine facilities constructed initially for the Nebraska State Fair and utilized throughout the year. Buildings include the Five Points Bank Arena and dedicated barns for cattle, swine, sheep and goats, as well as the Pinnacle Bank Expo Center.

“With the continued growth of the AKSARBEN Stock Show, we believe this is the right fit for us,” said Kevin Kock, executive director of AKSARBEN Agriculture Initiatives. “It will provide everyone from exhibitors to spectators with cutting-edge facilities and proper space to improve on what is already the premier livestock show in our region.”

For 89 years, the AKSARBEN Stock Show has called Omaha home. As the nation’s largest 4-H Stock Show, the event draws thousands of 4-H youth, family members and attendees from across the country, creating millions in direct economic impact for the

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Heartland. Proceeds from the event benefit scholarships, premiums, and awards for 4-H youth.

AKSARBEN Foundation officials believe the move to Grand Island provides the Foundation with opportunities to expand its impact statewide and increase the number of business and community leaders carrying out its mission *to leverage collective business leadership to build a more prosperous Heartland.*

“AKSARBEN Foundation has a long tradition of making meaningful and sustainable impacts beyond Omaha,” said Kirk Kellner, chairman of the Knights of AKSARBEN and regional president of Wells Fargo Bank. “Moving the AKSARBEN Stock Show to Grand Island demonstrates a commitment by AKSARBEN Foundation to maximize its impact in Greater Nebraska and grow the Knights of AKSARBEN leadership network.”

As part of the transition, day-to-day operation of the AKSARBEN Stock Show will shift to the Grand Island Livestock Complex Authority (GILCA) by 2019. GILCA is a collaborative which includes the Nebraska State Fair, Fonner Park, the Grand Island Chamber of Commerce, and Grand Island Hall County Convention and Visitors Bureau. AKSARBEN Foundation will remain the perpetual title sponsor, and members of the Knights of AKSARBEN will sit on the event’s oversight committee.

The Purple Ribbon Auction, which supports AKSARBEN Foundation’s annual contribution of \$250,000 to 4-H youth in the form of scholarships, premiums and awards, will be driven by a committee of Grand Island and Tri-Cities business and community leaders.

Cindy Johnson, President of the Grand Island Area Chamber of Commerce, said Grand Island and communities across central Nebraska will enthusiastically embrace the AKSARBEN Stock Show at its new location.

“Our region has made significant investments to attract leaders in the livestock show industry and drive economic impact,” Johnson said. “The AKSARBEN Stock Show is the premier 4-H stock show in the nation, and we anticipate tremendous interest among 4-H families and the Tri-Cities community. It’s a win-win for central Nebraska and for the AKSARBEN Stock Show.”

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“In the four short years since the creation of the Grand Island Livestock Complex Authority, we have worked diligently to bring national shows to Grand Island, with considerable success,” said Joseph McDermott, Executive Director of the Nebraska State Fair. “Never in my mind did I think that we would land one of the most prestigious shows in the country. This move of the AKSARBEN Stock Show to Grand Island exemplifies the hard work and hospitality of our community.

“The impacts of the cattle shows in Grand Island have been enormous and now the ability to have AKSARBEN, one of the most prestigious names in the livestock industry to come here, is a real identifier for our community,” said Brad Mellema, Executive Director of the Grand Island Convention and Visitors Bureau.

At its new venue in Grand Island, the AKSARBEN Stock Show is expected to draw more than 1,200 4-H Exhibitors from states throughout the Midwest, including Colorado, Illinois, Iowa, Kansas, Minnesota, Missouri, Nebraska, North Dakota, South Dakota and Wyoming. National Livestock Judging and Quiz Bowl competitions will draw an additional 700 competitors from across the nation.

The expanded facilities at Fonner Park house various exhibits including the Raising Nebraska interactive agriculture science experience, birthing pavilion and milking parlor, offering youth and visitors opportunities to learn more about the agriculture landscape of food, fiber and fuel production.

“Agriculture and education are central to the prosperity of our Heartland and are core initiatives of AKSARBEN Foundation,” Kock said. “With our partnership with Grand Island, AKSARBEN Stock Show’s vision is to grow as a premier destination for 4-H youth and as a leader in our support of youth agriculture education.”

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Established in 1895, AKSARBEN Foundation represents the premier employers in Nebraska and western Iowa. AKSARBEN Foundation works as a unified network to influence change for the betterment of youth, the economy and Heartland communities. We advance our mission *to*

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*leverage collective business leadership to build a more prosperous Heartland* by funding and guiding best practice, needs-based scholarship programs, awarding over \$1 million annually; promoting the Heartland's cultural heritage through top-ranking community celebrations, attended by over 100,000 annually; and honoring community leaders who carry on the Heartland's tradition of philanthropy and volunteerism.

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