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**For Immediate Release**

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## **150 MORE** *Looking Ahead at Nebraska State Fair*

*Grand Island, NE* – Where flour, salt and eggs are staple ingredients in baking, the fair business needs several basic elements to produce the perfect end product. As Nebraska State Fair plans for its 150<sup>th</sup> birthday next year, it will amplify its foundational roots of music, agriculture and community engagement for the next 150 years.

Fair Board Chair Chris Kircher of Omaha sees the State Fair on a tipping point. “We’ve enjoyed steady growth since arriving in Grand Island almost 10 years ago,” he said. “We are like a city that crosses a certain population point and begins to turn its own economy...we are right at that point of progression.”

Kircher said that crossing that proverbial river is pivotal to growing the State Fair. “We are now in strategy about our master plan. We expect to tackle capital growth such as adding facilities, infrastructure upgrades like shade and staging, and concert improvements.”

The State Fair has been considering options for its outdoor concert series, with this year’s lineup including Kelly Clarkson and Sugarland. “We are investigating the idea of going all outdoors,” said Lori Cox, executive director for Nebraska State Fair. “With the demand for stronger artists weighing on our

minds, and the fact that Heartland Event Center can only seat 5,000 people, we are looking at what it would take, from an infrastructure standpoint, to accommodate a large run of shows outside, somewhere.”

Livestock show growth has pushed conversations toward expansion opportunities. “We have asked what it might look like to move the Draft Horse Show and Cattle Dog Trials into the Heartland Event Center,” said Bill Angell, livestock division director. “The Event Center would give us more than double the seating capacity for these popular shows and provide opportunity for other dirt-floor events.” Angell said the popular high school rodeo and ranch rodeo could move to the Event Center and other equine events such as freestyle reining or hunter-jumper events could be showcased there.

“All ideas are being considered,” Cox added. “Right now we are asking ourselves what we want to look like in 10, 50, 150 years. That viewshed is important for our partners like Fonner Park and sponsors, and it’s vital to grow the brand for Nebraska.”

The 2018 Nebraska State Fair runs August 24 through September 3 in Grand Island. Ticket discounts are currently available at all Pump & Pantry locations or online **at StateFair.org**. Bundle prices, entertainment information and a schedule of events can be found online.

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