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NEBRASKA STATE FAIR WRAPS UP 149th YEAR *Livestock Entries, Family Experiences Reflect Nebraska Values*

Grand Island, NE – As Nebraska State Fair wraps up totals from the 149th Fair, State Fair officials are pleased with the results they are seeing in a number of key areas. These successful outcomes, which were achieved despite the impact of difficult weather conditions that persisted prior to and throughout most of the Fair's run, include:

- Strong growth in livestock and small animal entries. This year's entries exceeded last year's with a particular spike in FFA beef and 4-H rabbits.
- Significant growth in sponsorships. Sponsorship sales rose 16 percent over 2017.
- Continued year-over-year growth in overall customer satisfaction.
- Increases in the average number of days that fairgoers attend the Fair (approximately three days in 2018).
- Increase in number of travelers to the Fair from more than 76 miles from Grand Island.
- Increased national media coverage thanks, in part, to the State Fair's hosting of the Nebraska senatorial and gubernatorial debates.
- Increased security measures. Newly installed security cameras helped locate lost children quickly and reduced incidents throughout the Fair.
- New scholarships for 4-H and FFA participants. This program provided \$8,000 in tuition aid to market champions.
- Expansion of effort for those in need. The Fair's newly instated "Webster's Wonder Kids" served 100 foster kids by providing them gate admission, Up With People tickets and carnival wristbands.

“We are happy with the results we’re seeing for this year’s Fair,” said Lori Cox, executive director. “And, there’s much more to come. While there’s not much we can do about the weather, there’s plenty we can do to ensure that our guests enjoy a wonderful experience and keep coming back.” Cox continued to say that results like those achieved show that the State Fair is on the right path for continued success. “Taken together, they reflect good progress to accelerate growth forward,” she said. “As we plan for the Fair’s 150th birthday party in 2019, we’re very excited about what the future holds.”

Chris Kircher, chair of the Nebraska State Fair board of directors, said “The results we are seeing from this year’s Fair bode well for its continued success. In just the few short months since her mid-stream hire during the Fair planning process, Lori Cox has demonstrated to the Board that she’s a quick learner who delivers results. Looking ahead, we believe that many others will come to this same conclusion.”

Kircher said that the State Fair board, full time staff and department leads began strategic planning sessions in June with more meetings planned this fall. Items on the menu include an expected change in concert venue, concert ticket bundling, ingress and egress to the event, continual improvements to security and information technology, parking lot conditions, entertainment focused on target markets and food/vendor deal opportunities for guests.

The State Fair expects final revenues and attendance reports to be finished by around September 21, after finance staff has a chance to tally all data and an independent auditor can then confirm results. “We also will have a final report from our survey company,” Kircher said. “It will be great to share some of the opinion data we received throughout the Fair.”

The 2018 Nebraska State Fair ran from August 24 through September 3 in Grand Island. The 2019 Nebraska State Fair dates are August 23 through September 2.

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