



Walworth County Fairgrounds
P.O. Box 286
Elkhorn, WI 53121

June 8, 2016

RE: Introduction, New Membership Cards and the 2016 Fair.

Dear Lifetime Member,

It's hard to believe that one year has gone by since I was asked to join the Walworth County Fairground Staff as Fairground Manager.

I've met many of you, but there are still many left to meet. For those that did not know, early last year at the advice of two consulting firms, the Board of Directors held a nationwide search for someone to take the roll of fairground manager on a year round basis. I was alerted of the search through the International Association of Fairs and Expos (IAFE). I applied, and after months of multiple interviews and a study of my background, I was hired last summer.

My background is in marketing and advertising, and I was introduced to large event management in 1994. Since that time I have promoted and managed many outdoor festivals, concerts, fairs, and sporting events along with managing large fairgrounds while General Manager of the National Cattle Congress in Waterloo, Iowa and Complex in Gillette, Wyoming. After much contemplation my wife and I came to the conclusion that managing a large event facility and an annual fair was where my strengths and career choice should go. We had three choices: Texas, California and Elkhorn, Wisconsin. After visiting the area and meeting people in Walworth County, the choice was easy.

Growing up my father took our family from Colorado to Texas and eventually Iowa. After active duty in the Army I attended the University of Northern Iowa where I graduated with a degree in Economics. My wife Melody and I both have the majority of our families in Northeast Iowa. My extended family is from the Decorah, Iowa area and my wife Melody who is the current news person at WLKG Radio is farm girl from New Hartford, Iowa near Waterloo. We have five children ranging from 17 to 35 years old. Two are married, one is getting married in November, one is a junior at Iowa State University and another will be a senior in high school. We have three grandchildren and hopefully many more to come, plus three dogs. If you have been around the fairgrounds you may have met my best friend Oscar, our oversized and rescued Black Lab.

The Board of Directors hired me to help with the overall finances of the fairgrounds and increase the number of events during the non-fair season. In the last year we have accomplished a lot towards all of those goals.

It's important to note that major decisions are made as a team which includes the office staff, input from stakeholders such as donors, the Fair Foundation and the final say by the Board of Directors. Every decision is run through a filter question: "What is best for the fairgrounds and the fair?"

IMPORTANT CHANGES FOR LIFETIME MEMBERS:

As time and technology progress the fairgrounds does it's best to make sure that memberships remain a valuable asset to you and the fairgrounds.

Bar codes were added to Lifetime Membership cards a few years ago to make sure membership cards were valid. Today, bar codes have become less effective as a way to ensure your identity is secure and counterfeiting does not take place.

In an effort to improve our Lifetime Membership identity security and to help prevent duplication, we have created new membership cards with a "QR" code that will be scanned at our gates when you enter the fairgrounds.

After August 1st to make this exchange as easy as possible, we have created three options for you to exchange your old card for a new one:

1. You may mail your old card to the fair office and we will mail you a new one.
2. You may come to the office and exchange your card, or
3. You may exchange your old card for a new one when you come to the fair. With this option, a gate attendant will retain your old card and show you where to obtain your new card which will be near the main gate.

Because the QR Codes are designed to be scanned as you enter the fair and in an effort to not duplicate your entrance on attendance records, your pass will be allowed to be scanned one time a day. If you decide to leave the grounds, and return the same day, you have two options:

1. Receive a hand stamp so you can return without being scanned.
2. If you would prefer not to have your hand stamped you may show your pass along with a current identification card as proof of ownership.

UPDATES TO FACILITIES:

Because of generous donations and sponsorships, you will notice many facility changes taking place this year on the fairgrounds.

1. New offices are being finished because of a generous gift from Duane "Skip" and Carol Katzman. The new addition which is under the same roof as the existing offices will soon be called the Katzman Administration Building.
2. A new 4-H Picnic Pavilion is being built near the Activity Center through the generous donations of many people, and most notably Thelma Meyer in honor of her late husband. This building will include a kitchen and bathrooms.
3. Two new horse stall barns that will hold 100 stalls combined are being built through funding from Walworth County. Walworth County funded a study that provided us with a Long Term

Strategic Plan that recognized market potential for additional horse shows and competitions. Adding more stalls increases our chances of obtaining more of this off season business and has already yielded a new show in October of this year. The new stalls will also relieve the fair of spending thousands of dollars each year for horse stall tent rental.

NEW EVENTS:

We have added a new event starting this July 15th through the 17th called Ribfest. This event is free to the public and will feature professional BBQ companies competing for People's Choice Awards and a Community Division where local teams will compete for best ribs. There will be three days of live music, fun for the kids, an Artisan Village and more. We hope you will attend.

On August 19th and 20th Big Hat Rodeo will return for two nights of rodeo, but this year we will be hosting a country dance after the rodeo each night which will feature a live country band called Chasin Mason. Admission to the dance is free with your entrance fee to the rodeo.

On October 7th we are adding another event called the Boot Scootin Boogie Barrel Blast Barn Dance and BBQ. We have nearly 300 barrel racers coming in that weekend for a competition, and to kick it off the Friday night before we will be holding a BBQ and Dance with live music and food. There will be raffle prizes and more.

MEASURES TO ENSURE SAFETY:

The Walworth County Fair is known for being a family-friendly fair that is a safe environment for everyone, and maintaining that quality is a priority of the Board of Directors and me.

Other security measures have been implemented for vendors and volunteers that are part of our fair. Last year we implemented a new procedure for everyone participating in the fair that requires each worker or volunteer to be cross referenced with the government's list of sex offenders. This procedure has already proven itself effective.

FAIR ENTERTAINMENT:

This year our fair has already set a record. Our concert with Scotty McCreery on Sunday, September 4th, has outsold every show since daily concert ticket sales have been recorded.

We have another concert on Saturday, September 3rd that will feature a current rock band that will not allow us to announce their name until July 18th. This band plays rock and Christian music, and they have a new album which will be released on August 5th. The reviews by music publications are very good. Their music will attract younger fairgoers which the board believes to be a priority. Many members over the age of 35 will not know them, and might not care for their music. The messages of their songs however are very positive.

We have added some new free entertainment for our Park Stage that will please you along with more attention to gaps in entertainment on that stage. You will notice that as a Park Stage entertainer ends their performance, another act will begin under the Picnic Pavilion. One of the acts that I am personally excited about is Dueling Pianos under the Picnic Pavilion.

Bull Riding and Barrel Racing will entertain us on opening night and Truck and Tractor Pulls will commence on Thursday. Friday night will feature a bigger Monster Truck show that promises to deliver a better experience than last year. Saturday we will continue the tradition of Harness Racing and our grandstand concert that can't be announced yet will also take place. As many of you know Sunday, September 4th we will feature a concert by Scotty McCreery. Monday's grandstand show will continue to be Demo Derby for three performances.

FAIR TICKET PRICING:

For your friends that are not Lifetime Members it's good to know that season passes will remain at \$25 if they are purchased between June 1st and August 5th. Kids under 5 are free, daily passes for kids from 5 to 12 will be \$6. Seniors are \$8 on Senior Citizen Days, which are Wednesday, Thursday and Friday.

Carnival wristbands for Wednesday, Thursday and Monday will be offered a discount of \$5 each if purchased in advance through our website or at the fair office.

Parking will remain free except for those who have and still want a VIP season parking pass for \$50, along with those who are willing to pay \$5 for the closest section next to the handicapped parking in the lot across from the main gate.

This year there will be a charge for evening grandstand entertainment. It has become necessary to charge \$5 per person to enter the grandstands and for lawn chair seating for most of the evening performances. Demo Derby will remain at \$10 per person for all three heats. Pricing for the Saturday concert will be \$25 for track admission, and Sunday's concert with Scotty McCreery reserved seating on the track is \$40 and \$25 for the small bleachers.

SOME CLOSING THOUGHTS:

The Board of Directors is committed to the long term success of the fair, but suggestions from you as a Lifetime Member are always welcome. Please contact the fair office or me directly if you have an idea that will help the fair maintain its value to you.

Positive change is something everybody wants, but change is challenging. Rumors happen and sometimes they can cause anxiety, so we hope that you will seek the truth. If you have any questions, please call the office, me or a board member. It would be our pleasure to discuss any topic with you. For that matter consider this a standing invitation to stop in and have a cup of coffee.

I look forward to meeting all of you and having a very successful 2016 season.

God bless you all and we hope to see you at the fair.

Respectfully,

Larry Gaffey
General Manager
Walworth County Fairgrounds