

CELEBRATE THE **RED, WHITE & BLUE!**

August 16-21, 2022
Owatonna, MN



Steele County Free Fair



A Special Section Produced by the Steele County Times

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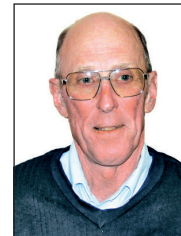


161st Annual Steele County Free Fair Celebrating the Red, White & Blue in 2022

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A MESSAGE FROM THE FAIR PRESIDENT

We're eager to 'Celebrate Red, White and Blue'



DAN DEML

the Village of Yesteryear Stage. Throughout the grounds you will also find many free attractions and educational exhibits, too!

Our Steele County 4-H Clubs will fill the 4-H building and barns with projects they have been working on and learning about throughout the year. There will be hundreds of commercial exhibits in the Four Seasons Centre and throughout the grounds along with many open class entries, including livestock, to enjoy, too.

With so many attractions to see and do, fairgoers are sure to get hungry and thirsty. This year's fair will not disappoint with nearly 100 food vendors to entice and satisfy your needs. Gold-star Amusements will be on the midway for thrills

and fun and will feature a daily ride special.

Tickets are on sale now at scff.org for the great line up in the grandstand: Tuesday evening features the FREE Classic Antique Tractor Pull; Maddie and Tae will be on stage Wednesday night; Thursday Hairball will have the stage rocking and Friday we are proud to welcome Joe Nichols. Saturday Bulls N Barrels will entertain fairgoers and Sunday will wrap up the grandstand shows with the always popular Demo Derby.

On behalf of the Steele County Free Fair Board of Directors and Staff, I look forward to seeing you at the fair!

Dan Deml
Steele County Fair
President

The Steele County Free Fair Board and Staff are eager to "Celebrate the Red, White and Blue in 2022" with each of you! As always, this year's fair offers something for everyone. Outstanding free entertainment can be found on stages throughout the grounds including the United Prairie Bank Stage in Fair Square Park, the Elmer Reseland Stage at KRFO Townsquare, Ye Old Beer Garden and

CELEBRATE THE RED, WHITE & BLUE IN 2022



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Tues. Aug. 16	Arch Allies	8:30 PM
Wed. Aug. 17	Johnny Holm Band	8:30 PM
Thur. Aug. 18	Street Talk	8:30 PM
Fri. Aug. 19	Travis Thamert	3:00 PM
	Shag	8:30 PM
Sat. Aug. 20	Led Penny	3:00 PM
	Mason Dixon Line	8:30 PM
Sun. Aug. 21	Dan Stursa Band	1:00 PM
	The White Keys	6:30 PM

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PUBLICATION OF STEELE COUNTY TIMES

Livestock Hall of Famers

Katzung, Dr. Seykora to be inducted at fair

BY JOHNNIE PHILLIPS
SPORTS EDITOR

The Steele County Livestock Hall of Fame will gain two members this year as Sharon Katzung and Dr. Tony Seykora will be officially inducted on Aug. 16 at 2:30 p.m. in the Steele County Free Fair's Livestock Arena.

Katzung will be recognized for her many years of commitment to the pork industry while Seykora's research in the field of dairy cattle genetics and work as a professor at the University of Minnesota will earn him a spot in the Hall of Fame.

"Both of them are more than deserving of being inducted. With all of the things they've been able to accomplish while staying committed to our area, it's nice to see them earn the recognition," said Dan Deml, president of the fair.

Despite her passing in 2015, Katzung's legacy as one of the leading advocates and promoters for pork in both the state and national levels will live on forever.

With 30 years under her belt of promoting pork, Katzung was able to hold many influential positions in the industry such as Chairwoman of



Dr. Tony Seykora

the Minnesota State Pork Queen Program, Steele County and Minnesota State Porkettes President, and the 1990 Outstanding 4-H Adult Leader Award.

Katzung was also a dedicated member to many local committees and organizations, most notably sitting on the board of the Steele County Farm Service Agency and Owa-

tonna FFA Scholarships/Awards committee, as well as being the secretary and treasurer of the University of Minnesota-Waseca Parents Council.

Seykora will also be inducted on Aug. 16, highlighting his years of study and dedication to dairy cattle genetics.

According to the SCFF Livestock Hall of Fame

committee, Seykora's research has led to "over 100 published papers, abstracts and press articles" all while Seykora committed 30 plus years to teaching in the department of animal science at the University of Minnesota.

His book "Practical Techniques for Dairy Farmers" has also been widely used by universi-



Sharon Katzung

ties since its publication.

Over the course of 29 years coordinating the University of Minnesota's Animal Science Department, Seykora's impact contributed to a program enrollment increase of over 250 students.

Aside from academics, Seykora spent 15 seasons coaching the University of Minnesota dairy judging

team, and facilitated over 130 4-H and FFA dairy judging contests, according to the SCFF Livestock Hall of Fame.

Introducing this year's inductees will be master of ceremonies Brad Rugg.

Rugg will officially induct Katzung and Seykora at the end of the ceremony ahead of the closing comments.

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STEELE COUNTY **Times**

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From farrow to the fair

BY JOHNNIE PHILLIPS
SPORTS EDITOR

With the Steele County Fair's livestock exhibition and swine show looming on the horizon, Blooming Prairie's Lexi Steckelberg is preparing to make another run through the county ranks and return to the state competition along with her new litter of pigs.

Growing up on her family's farm, "Farrow to Finish Hog Farm," Steckelberg has grown up raising swine and showing them at the fair, as well as being an active member of 4-H.

"When I was younger, I just wanted to go hang around the baby pigs and be Grandpa's sidekick. Now that I'm older, I'm the one teaching the younger kids about what to do and what not to do, how to feed the pigs, how to walk them... essentially everything I've learned over the years," said Steckelberg.

As an annual competitor in the fair's swine show, Steckelberg has had a solid track record of showing top-tier swine.

The rising senior has advanced through the county competition and been to the state fair competition every year since becoming eligible as a ninth grader.

As could be expected after such successful past experiences, Steckelberg said the goal is once again



SUBMITTED PHOTO

Lexi Steckelberg of Blooming Prairie walks with one of her pigs at her family farm. She will compete at the Steele County swine show on Wednesday, Aug. 17 as a part of the Steele County Fair's livestock attraction.

"The memories I've made are going to last forever, and the friendships I've made... are something I'll always keep near and dear to my heart."

Lexi Steckelberg
4-H Swine Exhibitor

to return to the state fair competition.

Yet, there is another aspect of her work that she enjoys even more than the fair shows.

According to Steckelberg, the pigs she brings to the swine show are as her family farm suggests: farrow to finish – meaning Steckelberg and her family raise the pigs from birth and care for them until they come of age to either go to show or be sold.

Each year along the way, Steckelberg is able to share her love for animals with the local community through her involvement with 4-H.

"My favorite part is definitely working with the little kids. I love their excitement and being able to introduce them to what we do," Steckelberg said.

Growing up on her family's farm and being a local 4-H member has been an experience that she has been grateful for over the years.

"The memories I've made are going to last forever, and the friendships I've made through the committees or working on the summer youth teams, are something I'll always keep near and dear to my heart."

Those looking to follow Steckelberg and her pigs at the Steele County swine competition can head over to the Livestock Pavilion on Wednesday, Aug. 17 where the show will begin at 7:30 a.m.



STAFF PHOTO BY RICK BUSSLER

It initially didn't look good for poultry exhibitors for this year's fair, but the poultry show will go on as usual. That brings good news to 4-Hers like Evan Melby of the Ellendale Hustlers who showed a champion animal at last year's fair.

Poultry show is back on in time for 2022 SCFF

There are some good things about being a "late" county fair, and this year proves it.

In an optimistic sign that last spring's avian influenza plague has run its course, the Minnesota Board of Animal Health ended its temporary ban on poultry exhibits at county fairs on July 1.

That's good news for 4-H poultry exhibitors at the Steele County Free Fair.

When the state's poultry industry was struck by a severe outbreak of avian flu that killed more than 3 million turkeys and chickens, poultry shows at county fairs across the

state were canceled. That also meant no trips to the Minnesota State Fair for kids who would normally have qualified at their county fair.

The flu affected 80 poultry flocks in 28 different Minnesota counties; no cases were reported in Steele County.

Experts with the state's board of animal health say it's too early to say if the virus will resurface.

It's possible, they said, in the late summer or into fall, as birds start migrating – hopefully, after Sept. 5, the final day of the Great Minnesota Get-Together.

WHAT TO DO IN THE EVENT OF A POWER OUTAGE

Lightning strikes, high winds, fallen tree branches – summer storms can be powerful, but leave us power-less! Rest assured, Owatonna Public Utilities will work non-stop until your power is restored. Here are some things to do in the event of a power outage:

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✓ **KEEP REFRIGERATORS AND FREEZERS CLOSED.**

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- A full freezer will keep the temperature for about 48 hours (24 hours for a half full freezer) if it remains closed.

✓ **PLAN AHEAD.**

- Have alternate plans for refrigerating medicines or using power-dependent medical devices.
- If you need to use a generator, keep it outdoors and away from windows.
- Use surge protectors, or disconnect appliances and electronics to avoid damage from electrical surges.
- Have portable power banks charged and ready for cell phones.
- Prepare an emergency kit with flashlights/candles and a weather radio.

✓ **REMEMBER, IF YOU SMELL NATURAL GAS OR HAVE AN EMERGENCY, CALL 911.**



View our interactive power outage map at:
www.owatonnautilities.com/outages



SUBMITTED PHOTO

A front view of the not-quite-complete Tin Roof Tavern, a portable bar that will serve alcohol on the infield of the track during concerts Wednesday, Thursday, and Friday nights at the Steele County Free Fair. Two ceiling fans, a sign and more will be added.

Tin Roof Tavern

Portable bar debuts at Steele fair

BY KAY FATE
STAFF WRITER

For years, if you wanted something stronger than lemonade or pop to wet your whistle at the Steele County Free Fair, you headed to the beer garden.

That changed in 2019, with the addition of the Steele Saloon, which serves hard alcohol.

Then came the break for COVID, which paused everything.

There was another first in 2021: “Last year was the

first year we tried selling liquor on band nights at the grandstand, and it went over really well,” said SCFF Director Doug Meier.

It went over well, but it wasn’t easy or efficient, working off tables, under a tent.

“We said, if this is going to go, and we’re going to make this happen, let’s build something where our people are under a roof, and there are serving counters, and if we want to, we can rent it out,” he said.

Introducing: Tin Roof Tavern, a portable bar that will be set up in the infield of the track during this year’s concerts at the SCFF.

Fairgoers attending music performances at the grandstand on Wednesday, Thursday, and Friday nights will be able to purchase liquor from the new tavern. Though it’s portable, it won’t be going anywhere else during Fair week, Meier said.

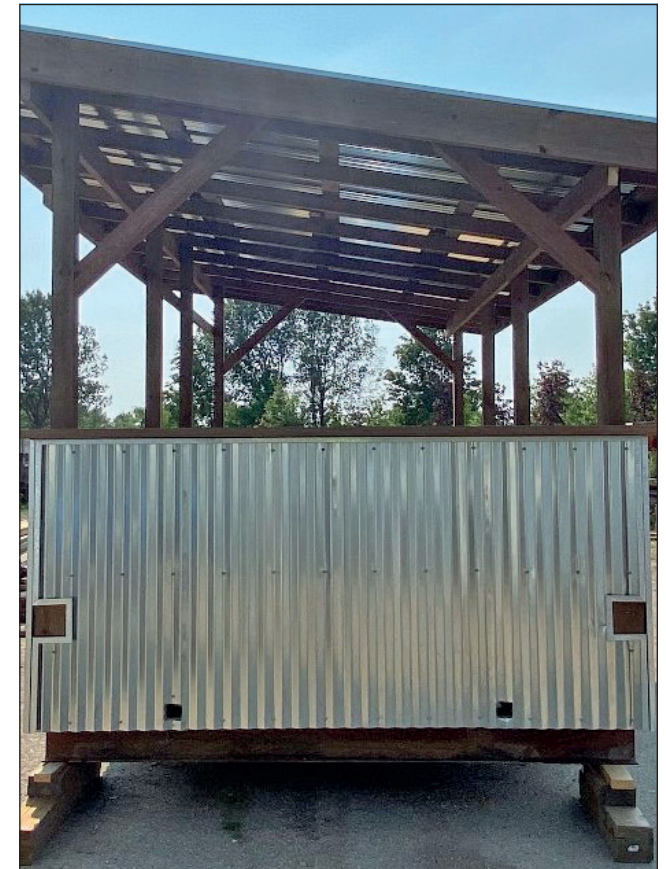
Drinks will be sold during Saturday’s bull-riding events also,

but not from the trailer. The liquor will be back on those tables in the grandstand since no one will be allowed in the infield.

The 8-foot-by-20-foot bar can hold up to eight people working inside. The hope is to have a cashier in the middle, a bartender on either side and two barbacks, providing support.

Ice will be kept in NSF-certified ice chests and two ceiling fans will keep air moving, Meier said. Beer will not be available from the tavern.

“We just had a one-year



SUBMITTED PHOTO

A view from the side of the Steele County Free Fair’s new Tin Roof Tavern, a portable bar under construction that will serve alcohol during concerts next week at the grandstand. The trailer can accommodate up to eight people working inside. Two ceiling fans, a sign and more will be added.

run at (selling liquor), and we realized we needed to make some changes,” he said. “I drew it up, and Welker Construction built it from the floor up.”

The company donated the labor.

Having the trailer near the Steele Saloon means workers there can “just slide over” to help out in the tavern. Both are staffed completely by volunteers.

While it makes its debut at the fair, the hope is to eventually rent out the Tin Roof Tavern, Meier said.

“We do a lot of weddings in the Foundation building, and we can set that thing in the corner...” he said. “It doesn’t have to be a ‘bar,’ you can serve food out of it.”

There are jacks on all four corners; “you slide the tires in and put the pins in, and down the road you go,” Meier said.

None of the details for its public use have been worked out.

“We haven’t even talked about it,” he said. “We’ll worry about that after the Fair.”

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See wildlife up close in new Otter Adventure

BY JONI HUBRED
NEWS EDITOR

A brand-new traveling show that features playful otters will come to this year's Steele County Free Fair, after the COVID-19 pandemic delayed its debut.

Greg Woody said he created Otter Adventure to not only entertain, but to educate the public about those animals and wildlife in general.

"If people don't get a chance to see them, they don't know about them," he said. "They're cute and active little guys, but they can also be destructive."

Otters have long bodies and short limbs, with webbed feet that propel them through the water. They live mostly on fish, Woody said, and people may be surprised to learn they have very sharp claws.

"They're cute and loving, but they're also carnivorous," Woody said. "They're not something you'd keep as a pet."

Woody said he has been around wildlife all his life and in the business for about 40 years. He also has what he calls the largest herd of mini-cows in the country.

The idea for Otter Adventure came from realizing how much interest people have in the animals. Along with events like the fair, he also



CONTRIBUTED PHOTO

Greg Woody built a 3,400-gallon tank to provide a habitat for otters that will be part of Otter Adventure, coming to this year's Steele County Free Fair.

"Otters are something a lot of people are intrigued by."

Greg Woody
Otter Adventure

brings the act to events like sporting shows.

"Otters are something a lot of people are intrigued by," he said.

Last week, Woody was putting the finishing touches on a 3,400-gallon water tank that will provide a habitat for the otters. The show, he said, will consist of showing off some tricks they've learned, an opportunity to watch them being fed, as well as information about the animals and what he believes is real truth about wildlife in general.

"If it wasn't for man, wildlife wouldn't exist," he said, explaining that when an animal is becoming extinct, people make the effort to bring it back. "Mother Nature kills a lot of animals every year."

Along with performances at the fair – Tuesday at 7 p.m. and Wednesday-Sunday, at 1 p.m., 4 p.m., and 7 p.m. – visitors will have an opportunity to just observe the otters playing.

Woody guarantees it'll be entertaining.

"Everything otters do is cute," he said.



CONTRIBUTED PHOTO

Karen Woody holds one of the otters that will be part of the Otter Adventure show at this year's Steele County Free Fair. In addition to shows, fairgoers will be able to watch otters in the habitat built for them.

Dinses' farm award is 'a family affair'

BY KAY FATE
STAFF WRITER

It took several minutes, but Mike Dinse eventually – grudgingly – allowed that he “must be doing something right.”

Indeed: He and his wife Marsha, along with their three children, were named the 2022 Steele County Farm Family of the Year.

They will be recognized during the Steele County Livestock Hall of Fame program at 2:30 p.m. Tuesday. The Dinses were selected by a county committee for the University of Minnesota Extension Service, which judges nominees on their support of agriculture, agriculture production and leadership.

Their response to learning about the award was that “you’re very, very humbled, but honored, more than anything,” Marsha Dinse said.

Humble is right. Here’s her husband’s description of their operation:

“We’re just basically a corn and bean farm that used to be a farrow to finish, years ago,” he said. Dinse “rented ground from my dad, and picked up some other ground, and now we’re sitting at 1,600 acres.”

The pair are fourth-generation farmers; all three of the kids are in ag-related careers, making it a five-generation vocation.

Their son, Matt, works for Central Farm Service as a precision ag specialist; son Mitch has a degree in ag education; daughter Mikayla is a junior at South Dakota State University, majoring in animal science with minors in ag business and ag marketing.

“She’s interested in the nutritional piece,” Marsha said, “as well as the breeding and genetics end of it.”

Mitch teaches industrial technology and some of the ag education at Owatonna High School, “and is really working with new programming for the new high school,” she said.

Marsha Dinse teaches third grade at Wilson Elementary; this is her 30th year with the Owatonna School District.

Perhaps not surprisingly, she believes one of the most important things about agriculture is educating people.

“I grew up on a farm, too,” she said. “As Steele County Pork Queen, it was my duty and obligation to make people aware of exactly what things go into agriculture and animals.”

So did they encourage their kids to pursue ag careers?

“You give them an opportunity, but they have to make their own choices,” Mike said. “You can’t push it on them. They were all involved in 4-H, so they got a taste from that perspective, but they’ve been exposed to



SUBMITTED PHOTO

The Dinse family, above, was named the 2022 Steele County Farm Family of the Year. From left are Mike Dinse; Marsha Dinse; daughter-in-law Paige Dinse, holding grandson Kayson; son Matt Dinse; daughter Mikayla Dinse and son Mitch Dinse. They farm in Meriden Township.

it their whole life, so they know what it entails.”

Marsha Dinse also credits 4-H for their family’s legacy.

“They’ve shown animals ever since they were little, and definitely had a passion for that,” she said. “They developed that work ethic and responsibility and got involved a great deal with different aspects of the county fair. For us, it was a huge family time, and family opportunity.”

Still, her husband said, “I wanted them to get out and find something else, so they had something

to compare it to. I was an electrician for 15 years, until my dad retired, but I was fortunate enough to have a good employer that let me off in the spring and the fall” to help his father on the farm.

He took over operations of the family farm in the early 2000s.

Dinse said the most important – and perhaps the most surprising – thing about ag is easy to answer.

“All the technology that’s out there now,” he said. “It’s kind of cool in some ways, and kind of irritating in other ways, but it’s something you have to

adapt to. It’s a way to get more efficient – both from an operation perspective, and fertilizer and seed usage.”

Dinse’s mechanical inclination extends to computers.

“If you look at it from the perspective of cause and effect, you can make a lot of things work,” he said. “If you just put some logic to it, and realize what your goal is at the end, it’s no different from fixing a piece of equipment. You have to understand how it works, and if you understand how it works, that’s three-fourths of the battle.”

Despite that ability, “I’ve been pretty conventional through the years, and it works for me, so I don’t see (myself) changing. I don’t see a reason to yet,” he said.

So how long does he plan to farm?

“Undetermined,” Marsha said.

Mike agreed.

“I’ll have to go with ‘undetermined.’ It’s going really well, and I’m not that old,” he said. “The stuff that moves on the end of the pitchfork isn’t there anymore; everything is being pushed around by hydraulics and diesel engines, for the most part. That makes your life a lot easier, saves the wear and tear on the body.”

This conventional farmer knows that technology is king, but offered this:

“I’ll roll with the punches, but I’ve always kind of thought that the first mouse never gets the cheese,” he said. Sometimes being on the cutting edge and investing resources “doesn’t pan out like it did on paper. From that perspective, I’ll let somebody else do that...”

In the meantime, their son Matt and his wife, Paige, have a new son.

Does that mean a sixth generation? Only time will tell, of course, but as Marsha said of the Dinse farm:

“It’s definitely a family affair; it really truly is.”



Auto museum draws convertibles to the fair

BY JONI HUBRED
NEWS EDITOR

Cars designed for sunny, summer weather take center stage in the Wells Fargo Auto Museum, set up during the Steele County Free Fair Aug. 16-21.

Les Abraham, who organizes the annual display with a small group of volunteers, said the vehicles vintage 1978 or older roll in from Owatonna and around Steele County.

There will be about 15 this year.

"That's all we can fit into the building," he said.

Abraham literally tracked down one of the vehicles, a Morris Minor convertible. The British vehicle was manufactured between 1948 and 1972.

"It's been running around town the last couple of years," he said. "I noticed it and contacted the guy."

A resident of Owatonna since 1952, Abraham said

he is a lifelong "car guy" and worked on cars even when he was a kid. He started working with the Auto Museum in 2001 and has loved the event ever since.

Along with finding vehicles as he did with the Morris Minor, and putting up a sign during the fair, Abraham said he has a very large list of local classic cars to mine when he's looking for Auto Museum display vehicles.

"I put together a list

seven or eight years ago of all the ones I knew, and by the time I finished I had four thousand cars I could choose from," he said. "I know there's probably twice that (around Steele County)."

Volunteer Charlie Kaplan said this year's display includes an Impala, Mustang, Firebird, and Cadillac, all manufactured in 1967. He called it "a nice diverse selection".

"It's pretty heavy on the 1950s and 1960s," he said.

"Those seem to be the easiest ones to find around here."

Visitors walk through the display every day of the fair, stopping not only to look at the cars but also to talk about them. Abraham said that's one of his favorite parts of the event.

"I love the camaraderie of the people coming in to look," he said. "Ever since I started, it's been a popular spot with old farmers and old car guys. They just love looking at them."

Abraham said he appreciates the support of the fair board in keeping the museum going. About 13,000 people walked through the building last year, so it's clearly a popular part of the event.

"You'll see a good show when you come," he said. "It's just fun to be around."

The Wells Fargo Auto Museum is located just north of the Four Seasons Centre on the fairgrounds. Learn more at scff.org.

First Lutheran of BP to lead contemporary service at fair

BY HOWARD LESTRUD
CONTRIBUTING WRITER

First Lutheran Church of Blooming Prairie is known as the Welcome Place.

Senior Pastor Heidi Heimgartner and Associate Pastor Mike Walerius will take their usual Sunday church service on the road on Sunday, Aug. 21 when they lead worship on the Steele County Fairgrounds during the Steele County Fair in Owatonna.

Worship will be at Fair Square. It is speculated that the crowd may exceed 1,000 persons on that day.

A more traditional service will be held at 9 a.m. at the Village of Yesteryear.

"We were ecstatic when we received the invitation to lead the church service at the fair on Sunday, Aug. 21," remarked Rev. Heimgartner.

Rev. John Weisenberger of Our Saviors Lutheran Church of Owatonna and Rev. Brent Carlson of Christ Community Covenant Church issued the invite, said Pastor Walerius.

"We knew we could provide worship and music but there had to be other things worked out," said Heimgartner. Number one, the two First Lutheran pastors said its congregation had to be told that there will be no service in BP on Sunday the 21st. It will be in Owatonna at the fairgrounds.

Secondly, the church had to contact KOWZ Radio too see if it could do a remote broadcast. KOWZ Radio said it could. There will be no live stream on Facebook.

Volunteers from First Lutheran and from other churches are encouraged to help with setup at 9:30 a.m.

Walerius said First Lutheran is involving its worship team, choir, pastors and ushers.

"We are investing our whole leadership corps," Heimgartner said.

The church service will be casual and informal. "We will not be wearing our vestments," Heimgartner said, adding "the people here at First are doers and they are willing to help in any way they can."

Song sheets will be handed out for the worshipers. Special music is also being planned.

"Our goal is participation," said Walerius, who is part of the Praise Team.

Donations from the public will go to a special charity.

In case of rain, worship will be moved to a sheltered area. Adequate seating will be provided. Adequate sound preparation will also be provided.

Both pastors believe the church setting will be a positive environment for families.

Heimgartner said the heart of the fair is a celebration of agriculture. "It is a robust fair."

First Lutheran's pastors said the readings will be brief. "Come and see the message," said Heimgartner.

"It's a new idea called outdoor worship," Walerius said.

Added Heimgartner, "The response to this move has been overwhelmingly positive."

The pastors encourage all faiths to attend this special outdoor service.



Pastor Mike Walerius and Pastor Heidi Heimgartner of First Lutheran Church invite all to the Steele County Fair's outdoor worship on Sunday, Aug. 21. First Lutheran Church of Blooming Prairie is coordinating the service.

STAFF PHOTO BY HOWARD LESTRUD

Steele County fair brings millions to the region

BY JONI HUBRED
NEWS EDITOR

Steele County's fair may be free to attend, but visitors to the annual, week-long event spend big bucks in the community.

A study completed by the Owatonna Area Chamber of Commerce & Tourism estimates the fair pumps about \$7.2 million into the local economy. President Brad Meier said the study took into account fair attendance estimates, where visitors and vendors come from, overnight stays and other factors.

While the figure isn't precise, Meier said, "We're using it as a kind of guide."

"Certainly, we think it's important for some of our hospitality businesses, with the vendors and people who travel here... We do hear that people get around town as well."

Convenience stores and grocery stores feel some impact as well, he said, with most of the activity happening on the south side of town near the fairgrounds.

That holds true for Atul Bhatnagar. He owns the Oakdale Motel, which is located near the fairgrounds, and said fair-time business has steadily improved since he bought the business in 1998.

While he sees some regular visitors, fair vendors

fill up most of the motel's 25 rooms.

"I've had the same vendors for years," he said. "They do a good business; they reserve a year in advance. All the vendors are like my family now."

What they seem to like most about Oakdale Motel, Bhatnagar said, is how close it is to the fairgrounds. They can park their vehicles and just walk across Oak Avenue to get there.

Those who work at other county fairs and even the Minnesota State Fair have told him it's rare to find a nice place to stay that is also close to where they're working.

"They think it's part of the fairgrounds," he said. "They can just park and walk across the street, they really love it."

Bhatnagar said his other property, the Comfort Inn, also sees a bump in occupancy during the fair.

Meier said surveys conducted by the fair board show about a third of visitors come from outside of Steele County. Through word-of-mouth, they've also heard about people who come to Owatonna for other reasons and arrange their trips to incorporate a visit to the fair.

Meier said the Chamber promotes the fair, fields calls, and answers questions, primarily through its Tourism department.

"We just do our best to



STAFF PHOTO BY JONI HUBRED

Atul Bhatnagar owns Oakdale Motel, which is located right across the street from the Steele County Free Fairgrounds. As the fair has grown, he says, so has his business.

support it," he said. "It's a long-standing partnership. The uniqueness of having a huge free fair is a big draw, and they do a really nice job over there with having unique attractions... They just find a way to keep the magic alive by making tweaks

and improvements every year."

Meier also had high praise for the scores of dedicated volunteers who work on the Steele County Free Fair every year.

"They make that one slice of the summer go really well," he said.

"They do a good business; they reserve a year in advance. All the vendors are like my family now."

Atul Bhatnagar
Oakdale Motel Owner

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STAFF PHOTO BY JONI HUBRED

From left, C.W. Wolfe and Scott Seykora are part of a crew that maintains the Steele County fairgrounds through the summer, not only for the Free Fair but also special events.



STAFF PHOTO BY JONI HUBRED

Teagun Ahrens, 17, (foreground) and Beckett Seykora, 17, both seniors at Owatonna High School, do some work in the shop to help prepare for the Steele County Free Fair. Both are part of the grounds crew; Beckett is the son of manager Scott Seykora.

Steele fairgrounds crew learns together all summer long

BY JONI HUBRED
NEWS EDITOR

When Scott Seykora returned to Owatonna to work as a teacher, his long-time friend Josh Prokopec asked if he'd like to help on the grounds crew at the Steele County Free Fair.

Now Prokopec oversees buildings and grounds as a fair board member, and Seykora manages the team Prokopec joined as a teenager. Since May, workers have been getting the fairgrounds in shape to greet thousands of fairgoers Aug. 16-21.

"We've got seven full-time guys out here, all here 40 hours a week," Seykora said. "Every building on the grounds gets touched sometime during the summer."

The work actually starts in May, when a group of college students arrive. Seykora, who teaches art at Owatonna High School (OHS), and his students can't get started until school's out in June.

"We do everything from shingling buildings, putting in windows, we build buildings... you name it, we've done it," he said. "It gives kids experience with a lot of different things every day."

The grounds crew also works hand-in-glove with

"Every building on the grounds gets touched sometime during the summer."

Scott Seykora
Fair Buildings Manager

all of the people who help make the fair run, Seykora added.

This year, they've fixed a slope so that water drains properly in front of the Mother's Rest area and made a new entrance for the grandstand shows, which required pouring a new cement sidewalk.

The grounds crew also works for non-fair events. Seykora said they prepped and cleaned up before the Big Sky National Cutting Horse Association shows held last month, as well as a celebration hosted by Federated Insurance. Workers put out 114 picnic tables for that event.

"We used to borrow those," he said. "Now we're able to provide (tables) for people who want to rent out the grounds."

As they're preparing for the fair, Seykora said, the crew calls the grounds "our little island, where we're free to drive around." Once fair preparation starts, though, they're working on requests for more pressing repairs or improvements needed to buildings, from repainting and repairs to new building projects.

And when the fair is over?

"Number one, we start on the barns and get all the animal waste out," he said. "We get everything picked up from different areas, bags from under the grandstand. We put up close to 50-60 signs...those have to come down."

The grounds crew has also built nine portable buildings over the years that are all stored to protect them from the weather.

With all that work to be done, the crew really bonds over the summer, Seykora said. Last year, they all worked together on re-siding the Great Outdoors Center; this year, they are mostly working in pairs on smaller projects.

Either way, he said, "You gotta trust each other."

Working with Seykora is part of what has kept C. W. Wolfe coming back to the crew for around 13 years. They've coached lacrosse together at OHS.

But Wolfe also just enjoys the whole fair atmosphere.

"There's just nothing like it around here," he said.

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Packin' power to entertain kids for 2 decades

Every summer for 20 years, Rick Scholbrock has fulfilled his greatest passion through his company, Kid Power Pedal Pulls. Working out of a small Northern Iowa town, Scholbrock is famously known, and likely to be recognized by anyone attending a local fair, as the “kids’ tractor pull guy.” He and his team travel across four states hosting dozens of tractor pull events for competitors ages 4 through 11 each year from April through October.

Lifelong Ellendale resident Al Lee remembers that 18 years ago, while attending the Steele County Free Fair, he saw Scholbrock running one

of his events. “I said we need to bring something exciting to Ellendale Days. This was that something,” said Lee.

Besides the Steele County Fair, Scholbrock has entertained children at Ellendale Days, Blooming Prairie’s Old Fashioned Fourth of July, New Richland’s Farm and City Days and the Waseca County Fair.

Scholbrock has earned statewide recognition and was featured on Good Morning America, but he says recognition is not the reason he does what he does.

“At the end of every day, I know I made 24 kids happy,” Scholbrock says with a wide grin as he ges-

tures to a rack of trophies. “Bill Gates has nothing on me except maybe his billions of dollars. Money can’t buy you this level of happiness.”

Scholbrock spoke for a long time about great memories he’s had along the way. His company trailer is neatly kept and includes a small billboard with pictures and drawings, some of which come from fans.

“There’s one girl, whenever we come to her hometown, she comes and yells. ‘Grandpa, Grandpa,’ and gives me a hug,” Scholbrock explains. “Parents thank me all the time for providing this experience for their young kids. This girl came to her first pull at the age of four and has been back every year since.”

That same girl gave Scholbrock a drawing, which hangs on that billboard today.

Scholbrock is from Hanlontown, Iowa, about 45 minutes south of Ellendale, where he has been mayor for more than 30 years. He first learned of pedal pulling at a local fair he was attending with his family. At the time, his daughter, now 26 and the operator of her own pedal pull business, was only 4 and participated in her first kid power event. From there she went on to win 28 national titles and multiple international championships. Scholbrock said



With his tongue sticking out and putting all his might into it, a youngster from Medford pedals his way to the finish line during the Steele County Free Fair last summer.

“Bill Gates has nothing on me except maybe his billions of dollars. Money can’t buy you this level of happiness.”

Rick Scholbrock
Pedal Pull Operator

there are no longer any international events, but the national competition spans 22 states.

The cost to get Scholbrock and crew to a local event isn’t so high, and oftentimes is paid for through local sponsors, or in the case of Ellendale, through the local fire department. “Now people

can see where their fish fry money goes,” Ellendale fire fighter Shawn Larson joked.

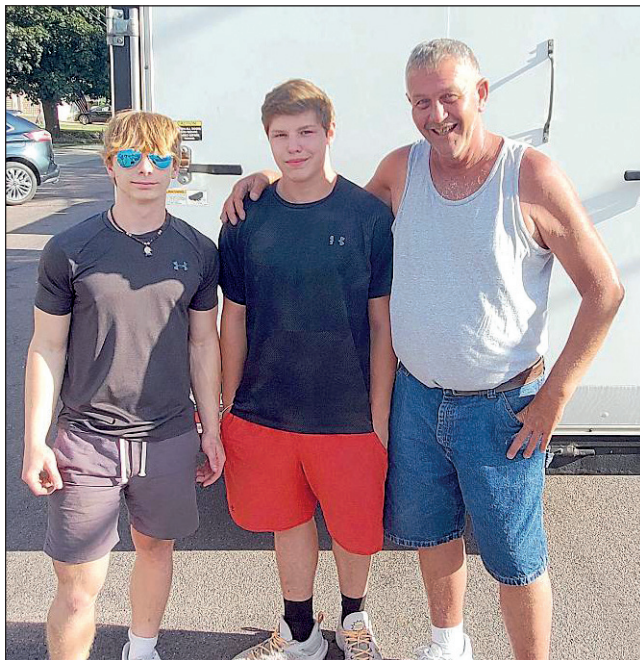
Larson’s daughter performed well in her leg of the race, taking first in her age category. Scholbrock can confirm something happened for the first time ever at this year’s Ellendale Days,

held mid-June. “I don’t get to say this often, but you got smoked by a girl,” Scholbrock joked. “I think today was a record for us, five times a girl won today.

“And don’t forget to have Mom or Dad fill out your slip,” Scholbrock reminds participants. “Even if you don’t go, that can qualify you for the state competition.”

He will be at the Steele County Fair on Friday, Aug. 19.

Scholbrock can be reached via his company’s Facebook page Kid Power Pedal Pulls, by phone 641-425-6211, or by email: htwnmayor@wctatel.net.



Kid Power Pedal Pulls will be featured once again at the Steele County Free Fair. Operators include, from left: Gavin Vesper, Kaden Oliver and Rick Scholbrock.



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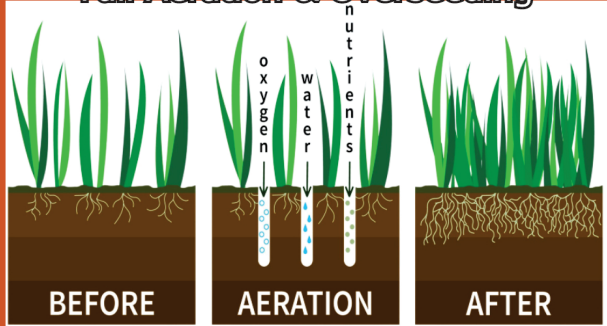
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The tunes coming to town

2 headliners make debut at fair grandstand

BY JOHNNIE PHILLIPS
SPORTS EDITOR

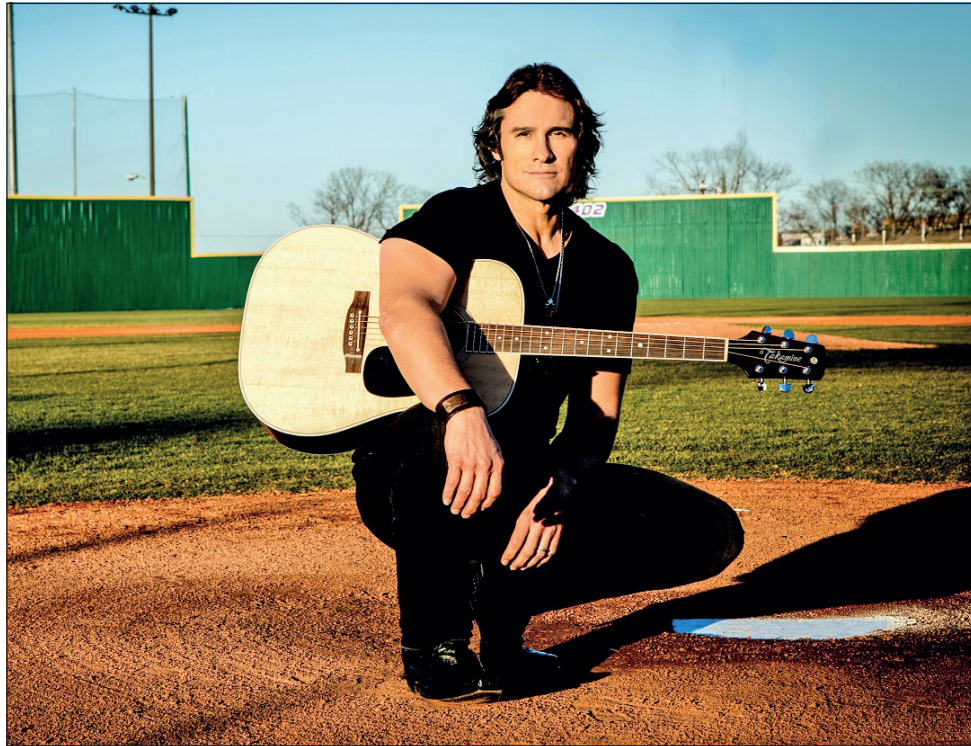
The Steele County Fair will feature a diverse soundtrack this summer with artists Maddie and Tae, Hairball and Joe Nichols coming to town to perform at the grandstand.

Hairball will be making its 21st consecutive appearance, while Maddie and Tae and Nichols will be making their fair debuts.

"After last year and all the buzz around town for Craig Morgan – the venue was nearly sold out, but unfortunately we had to cancel due to weather – we had the opportunity to look at diverse genres of music and target a younger audience," said Scott Kozelka, manager of the fair. "People come from all around for a great show at the fair, and we plan on giving them just that."

Headlining the Friday, Aug. 19 grandstand performance will be Nichols, whom many country fans in the county may be familiar with from his many chart-topping singles.

Some of Nichols's discography includes "Brokenheartsville" and "Tequila Makes Her Clothes Fall Off," both of which became number one singles on the *Billboard* Hot Country Singles and Tracks.



Nichols will take the stage at 7 p.m. and round out the fair's grandstand performances.

Also performing at the fair will be Maddie and Tae, who are slated to perform on Wednesday, Aug. 17 at 8 p.m.

The band – comprised of country artists Maddie Font and Tae Kerr – is the fair management's way of reaching out to the younger audience at the fairgrounds.

Both born in 1995, the duo originally began performing together in 2010 after sharing a mutual vocals coach, and made their break into the country

music scene in Nashville, Tennessee.

Some of Maddie and Tae's songs include "Die From a Broken Heart" and "Friends Don't" with the duo's most recent album release being *Through the Madness, Vol. 1* which came out on Jan. 28, 2022.

Also performing during the fair will be Hairball, who will hit the stage for the Thursday, Aug. 18 show starting at 8 p.m.

Hairball is no stranger to the Steele County Fair as it heads into its 21st consecutive performance at the venue.

Fans can expect to see some of their favorite 80s

rock flair from the group that performs songs from the likes of KISS, Queen, Mötley Crüe and Aerosmith to name a few.

Those looking for a taste of what Hairball brings to the table need to look no further than the bio of their website hairballonline.com

According to Hairball, "A band puts on a concert – Hairball puts on an event! Hairball is a Rock & Roll experience you won't soon forget. The lights, sound, smoke, fire, bombs, and screaming hoards of avid fans... to merely call it a concert would be like calling Mount Rushmore a roadside attraction!"



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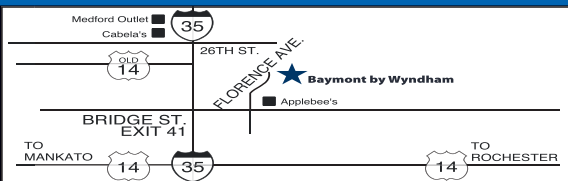




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**STORY
AND PHOTO
BY RICK BUSSLER**

Jam making is serious business around the country home of Carla Brady.

A few years back she was making so much jam and candies in a small kitchen that she convinced her husband Byron to convert their attached garage into her “Candy Kitchen.” It’s an industrial-sized kitchen equipped with commercial grade sink, refrigerator, work tables and shelving.

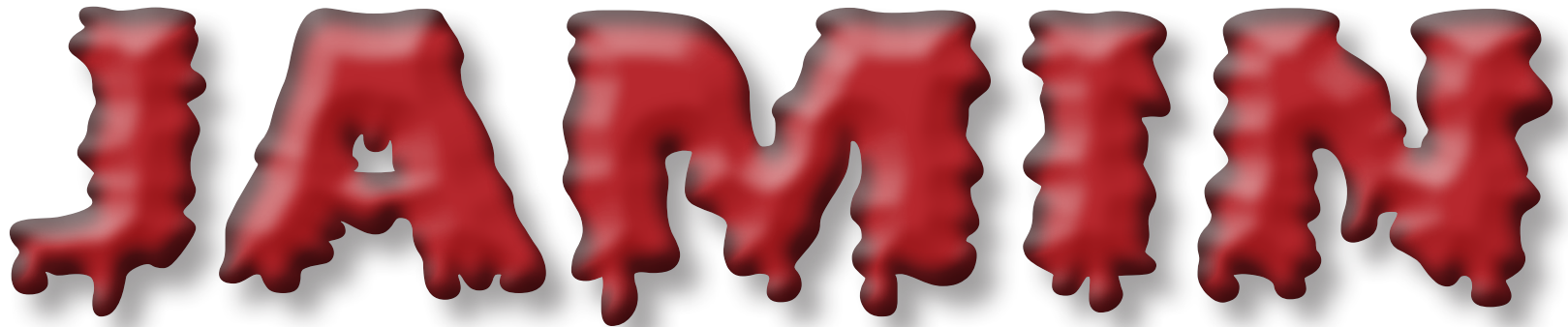
“I feel lucky to have this set up,” she said, quickly adding, “My husband tells me all the time how lucky I am.”

It has become her getaway from reality, a happy place where she can make sweets to delight other family members and strangers alike.

Besides giving jars of jam to family, she also sells them at the Farmer’s Market in Owatonna throughout the summer and fall. And her delicacies will be featured at the upcoming Steele County Free Fair where she has entered them in the open class competition for years.

The process

She begins her jam season in June when the strawberries are ready to pick. She utilizes her six grandchildren to pick around 75 pounds of strawberries. “We have



Brady gets jams and more ready

“If I’m stressed, I like to come and cook. I just feel good. It makes me happy. I get more enjoyment out of cooking.”

Carla Brady
Jam Maker



IT UP

for the fair

"In the end, the only monument that matters may be the work of love we've carved into the lives around us. We are not put into this world to sit still and know. We are here to act."

Georgie's Journal
(Georgette Maas)



a contest to see who can clean them the fastest," Brady said, adding her grand kids are so proud of helping grandma.

Much of the fruit used for jams comes from the Brady farm. They grow cherries, grapes, apples, raspberries and elderberries. The process of making jam begins with them netting the trees "otherwise the birds will get them all."

They used to have a plum tree, but it broke off in a storm last year. The Bradys also have a huge garden of beans, squash, tomatoes, cucumbers, onions and asparagus. "We have one of the best asparagus patches in Steele County," she said.

She turns all the fruit into jams and jellies.

"You have to have good fruit, not overly ripe. If it gets too ripe, it isn't as good."

Her personal favorite?

"Peach," she said.

"Fresh strawberry is really good, too."

She describes elderberry as a mix of grape and apple. "You have to acquire a taste for it," Brady said.

After picking the berries, they spend time pitting the berries to remove all the pits. Some of Brady's 14 grandchildren have become involved with the jam making. She recently had one of her grandsons for three days learning how to make jams and jellies.

"We believe in sharing and teaching," Brady says.

See **BRADY** on 37 ►

Fan favorites and more return to food lineup

BY KAY FATE
STAFF WRITER

All bets are off when it comes to festival food – and it's no different with the offerings this year at the Steele County Free Fair (SCFF).

There are five new vendors – Agave Express, Benny's Bigfoot BBQ, Bryan's Sirloin Tips, Diventuri, Simply Sweet Cheesecake – and Waffle Chicks returning after a five-year absence.

There are also some new foods from fan favorites, including a donut dog, deep-fried banana pudding, a Jucy Lucy burger, and dill flavored French fries.

Agave Express

This is an outlet of Agave Kitchen in Hudson, Wis., will make its first appearance at the SCFF in 2022. The website of its home base, **Agave Kitchen**, boasts about its legendary nachos, made with corn tortillas, pico de gallo, roasted sweet corn black bean salsa, cheeses, hydro-greens, roasted jalapeno salsa, ranch and sour cream on pork or chicken carnitas. They're bringing their Agave Twinkie, Tachos (tater tot nachos) and street tacos to Owatonna. The home kitchen also features a wide variety of tacos, including skirt steak;

Atlantic cod; vegetarian; street style and more.

Benny's Bigfoot BBQ

It has a Southeast Minnesota feel – owner Ben Berhow is a 2006 graduate of Albert Lea and was a state champion wrestler for ALHS. His specialty is smoked pork belly bites, but his business offers pork several different ways, including a pork tenderloin sandwich; bacon mac and cheese; cheesy Carolina pulled pork sandwich; pork chops; nachos, hot dogs and more. Benny's offers his House Sauce for a "sweet and tangy" addition to the pork products; Texas Mustard for a "bold and tangy" taste; and Hot Pepper Peach, for a "sweet and hot" bite. His stand will be on the north side of the grandstand.

Bryan's Sirloin Tips

Bryan's is traveling to Steele County from Argos, Ind., but has served his sirloin tip dinners and sandwiches from Florida to Memphis's Beale Street and throughout the Midwest.

Sara Diventuri is the owner of **Diventuri Concessions**, which specializes in festivals and fairs. Though it's been in business since 2005, this year marks its debut at the Steele County Free Fair. Look for plenty of deep-fried delicacies: raviolis, pickles, mashed potatoes



SUBMITTED PHOTO

Benny's Bigfoot BBQ will bring its smoked pork belly bits, pulled pork sandwiches and macaroni and cheese to the SCFF for the first time. He'll be located north of the grandstand.

and more on the north side of the Four Seasons Centre.

· **Deep-fried mashed potatoes:** Garlic mashed potatoes on a stick: Instant love for twice-baked potato fans but eat them fast while the crust is crispy.

· **Deep Fried Beef Raviolis:** Deep-fried beef ravioli with marinara, with herbs and beef filling.

· **Deep Fried Cheese Raviolis:** Crispy, plenty of fluffy cheese, and it gets even better dunked in marinara.

· **Deep-fried mac & cheese wedges:** Tasty, and even better with ranch dressing.

· **Deep-fried Buffalo chicken wing dip:** The chicken is cut finely,

providing a spicy, gooey bite with a seasoned sour cream dip.

· **Deep-fried pickle spears:** Piping hot and plenty tangy. Served with ranch dressing.

· **Deep-fried Twinkies:** As rich as it sounds.

· **Deep-fried Snickers:** Ooey, gooey deep-fried Snickers. The bar shape melts away, leaving a pool of chocolate. For some, not a bad thing.

It's practically a straight shot down Interstate 90 for **Simply Sweet Cheesecake**, which will set up shop at the SCFF for the first time. Megan Hall opened her business in 2014 in Lakefield, selling



SUBMITTED PHOTO

Benny's Bigfoot BBQ specializes in pork, including pulled pork sandwiches with one of Benny's custom sauces to choose from. Ben Berhow is bringing his concessions to the SCFF for the first time.



SUBMITTED PHOTO

This is a donut dog: A homemade long john with a beef hot dog, applewood bacon and drizzled with icing. They'll be available at DeAnna's Diner.



SUBMITTED PHOTO

Diventuri Concessions features a deep-fried chicken wing dip. The chicken is cut finely, providing a spicy, gooey bite with a seasoned sour cream dip. This will be the vendor's first year at the SCFF.



It's all things deep-fried at the Diventuri Concessions trailer, including deep-fried mashed potatoes, deep-fried pickles, and deep-fried ravioli.



DeAnna's Diner will offer deep-fried banana pudding, which is donut holes layered with fresh bananas, banana pudding, whipped cream and a caramel drizzle. DeAnna's can be found east of Fair Square Park.

traditional cheesecakes, cheesecake cupcakes, cheesecake muffins, scones, cookies and more.

Hall's mother was the "original baker," she said, "and I just adjusted the recipe to my liking, and out came my creamy, flavorful cheesecakes." She'll offer her cheesecake cupcakes and personal 4-inch cheesecakes in Owatonna from her spot on the north side of Fair Square Park.

The **Waffle Chicks** are back in business at the Steele County Free Fair, serving a variety of foods inside a waffle, on a stick. That includes chicken tenders, breakfast sausage, Snickers bar and brownies. The Chicks have been featured on Food Network's "Carnival Eats," and will be located east of Fair Square Park.

While not new to the SCFF food scene, **DeAnna's**, a long-time fair vendor, is bringing two new offerings to the 2022 concession scene: a donut dog and deep-fried banana pudding. The dog is a homemade long john with a beef hot dog, applewood bacon and an icing drizzle. The banana pudding features donut holes layered with fresh bananas, banana pudding, whipped cream, and a caramel drizzle. DeAnna will be east of Fair Square Park.

A Minnesota original, the **Jucy Lucy**, will be served at **Come and Get It**, located north of the Grandstand. It's a burger filled with cheese and topped with more cheese, sauteed onions, sweet pepper, homemade pickles, and remoulade sauce.



Simply Sweet Cheesecake will be offering cheesecake cups, above, and personal 4-inch cheesecakes at the stand on the north side of Fair Square Park.



You can find this Agave Twinkie at Agave Express, north of the grandstand. It's a cream cheese-stuffed jalapeno pepper wrapped in pulled pork and bacon and covered in raspberry chipotle. This is Agave's first visit to the SCFF.



The Jucy Lucy burger is filled with cheese, topped with American Cheese, sauteed onions, sweet pepper, homemade pickles, and remoulade sauce. You can find it at Come and Get It, north of the grandstand at the SCFF.



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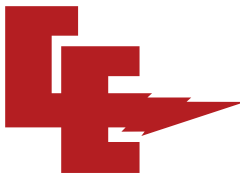
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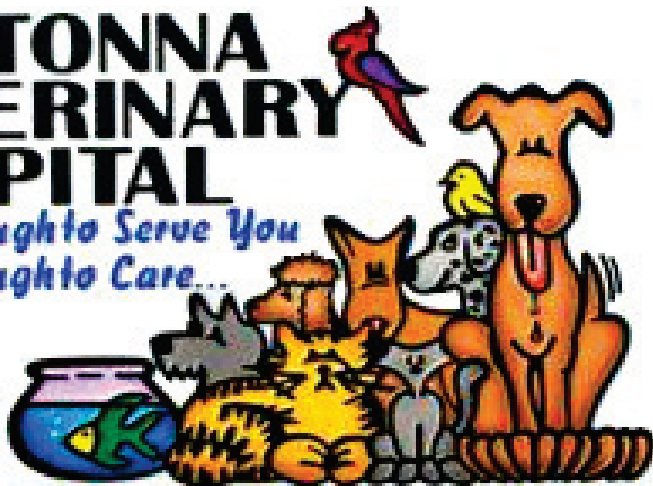
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BY RICK BUSSLER
PUBLISHER

Dan Deml isn't one to shy away from wanting to achieve records, but in the case of Steele County Fair's attendance, he would be just happy continuing to crack the 300,000 mark.

It has been eight years since the fair hit the record of estimated attendance at 350,899.

But as Deml, who is president of Minnesota's largest fair, looks around at the area he feels it's unrealistic to expect records all the time.

"You have to recognize that there are only so many people that live in Southern Minnesota," Deml said. "Populations of rural areas like ours are not growing very much. If you can maintain attendance, that's about as good as you can expect."

Deml also recognizes that every other county throughout the area has a fair. "We're not the only game in town. People are spoiled around here with good fairs all around us," he said, noting that isn't the case in some other areas of the state.

The fact that Steele County doesn't charge anything at the gate, Deml said, is one of the biggest reasons attendance swells as high as it does. "We're a free fair and we have lots of free entertainment," he said. "There is a lot of free entertainment for all ages of the family. We offer a good value."

He also credits the strong 4-H program in

Fair hopes to maintain 300K mark

FAIR ATTENDANCE Through the Years

Here are the estimated attendance figures for the past 57 years:

1964: 182,899	1984: 160,086	2004: 279,740
1965: 192,085	1985: 166,485	2005: 277,782
1966: 201,463	1986: 163,159	2006: 292,060
1967: 208,365	1987: 165,606	2007: 250,566
1968: 197,764	1988: 153,186	2008: 297,397
1969: 209,822	1989: 157,782	2009: 282,803
1970: 209,822	1990: 143,582	2010: 285,605
1971: 203,177	1991: 149,325	2011: 306,597
1972: 135,451	1992: 152,311	2012: 321,926
1973: 189,222	1993: 147,742	2013: 350,899
1974: 193,235	1994: 155,129	2014: 339,671
1975: 204,784	1995: 164,436	2015: 307,403
1976: 174,067	1996: 177,590	2016: 279,737
1977: 182,770	1997: 182,917	2017: 300,717
1978: 171,806	1998: 200,294	2018: 313,046
1979: 166,652	1999: 228,355	2019: 322,437
1980: 151,224	2000: 251,168	2020: No Fair
1981: 173,908	2001: 263,726	2021: 303,091
1982: 175,647	2002: 267,418	2022: ?????
1983: 172,135	2003: 276,697	

"Running the fair is just like farming. Weather can be your biggest enemy."

Dan Deml
Fair President

Steele County for contributing to such high attendance.

And, of course, there's weather. Rain and incredible heat can ruin a fair in no time.

"Running a fair is just like farming," Deml says. "Weather can be your biggest enemy."

Mother Nature hasn't been kind over the years. One of the worst years in recent memory was 2016 when the excessive rain caused five of the seven

major grandstand shows to be cancelled. During that year, the attendance was 279,737, one of the worst in nearly a decade and the only time in the past 10 years that attendance hasn't cracked the 300,000 mark.

Since the fair offers free admission, officials can only estimate attendance. They use an equation factoring in arcade sales, midway sales, parking, ATM transactions and beer garden sales to



arrive at an estimated attendance.

The first fair in Steele County took place in 1871. Records, however, weren't kept until 1918 when 5,000 people attended the fair.

Attendance swelled to 72,000 in 1927 when the fair switched to a free gate.

FAIR ATTENDANCE AT GLANCE

- 2021 Attendance: 303,091
- Down 6% from 2019 (no fair in 2020)
- 2019 was highest since 2014
- Record attendance: 350,899 in 2013

Get schooled in glass blowing at SCFF

BY KAY FATE
STAFF WRITER

“I’ve driven through Minnesota once, but I would’ve loved to spend more time there,” said Devan Cole.

After meeting Scott Kozelka at a convention last fall in San Antonio, Texas, Cole got his wish.

“I’m excited to be coming out,” he said, but more importantly, he’s excited to share his passion and his art.

Hot Glass Academy will be performing at least six glassblowing shows a day at the 2022 Steele County Free Fair, each lasting between 20 and 30 minutes. In addition, Cole said, he’ll be doing several “mini-workshops.”

“I remember the first glass art exhibit I went to growing up,” he said. The son of artists, his parents exhibited their own work and brought him along when he was a child.

He didn’t enjoy the exhibitions – until he saw blown glass.

Cole took a class in college and now has a degree in fine arts. He’s been “blowing,” as he puts it, for 20 years.

Though he grew up in upstate New York, “I’ve been a nomad most of my life,” Cole said. Traveling to festivals and events, demonstrating the art of glass blowing, is the perfect fit for him.



SUBMITTED PHOTO

Devan Cole, right, works with molten glass in his workshop in Americus, Ga. His business, Hot Glass Academy, will be at the 2022 Steele County Free Fair, performing multiple glass-blowing demonstrations throughout the week. Several of the pieces will be for sale; it is sponsored by PirkI Gas.

While he attributes his creativity to genetics – and the exposure to multiple mediums – “I’m more of a three-dimensional artist,” Cole said. “I have a tactile sense of art; it allows me to imagine in a new visual language.”

He has a crew of what he calls “very, very, very skilled glass workers” who

will be performing. Many of the completed pieces will be for sale, while others will go to Hot Glass Academy’s sponsor, PirkI Gas. PirkI is supplying the propane Cole will use to heat his equipment to 2,000 degrees.

The blowers will use a PA system to narrate as they work.

“There’s so much happening so quickly,” he said, “and we can’t slow down” to answer many questions. “That changes the process. I always encourage people to come back the next day,” because colors – and shapes – change throughout the process.

In addition to the mul-

tiples pieces the crew will create during the daily shows, other work will be on display.

“I always bring exhibits to show what the glass can do,” Cole said.

Working with a furnace and torches in the middle of an August day “is definitely part of the trade,” he said. “We have electrolyte tablets

and lots of fans,” and the crews swap in and out of the process as necessary.

“You can only stand there for so long,” Cole said.

He is the founder of the academy, which operates out of Americus, Ga., and offers workshops, private parties, and summer camps to share the experience.

Brady gets jams and more ready for the fair

◀ **BRADY** from 25

“That’s what my mom did and I think it’s important.”

She has found many people simply don’t take the time to teach their children and grandchildren things. “That’s one of the blessings of being retired. I go help the grandkids with their projects,” she said.

Jars are filled with water and placed in the oven at 350 for 40 minutes in an effort to sterilize them. “We don’t want to worry about bacteria in the jars,” she said, noting she usually makes 11 half-pint jars per batch of jam.

In the meantime, Brady utilizes a large kettle she received as a wedding gift

45 years ago to cook on her gas stove the berry of choice along with White Sure-Jell, which offers less sugar. She constantly stirs the mixture for about 50 minutes, making sure all the pits have been removed from the fruit.

“You have to keep stirring across the bottom or it will burn. That’s one heck of a kettle, wouldn’t you say,” she said as she stirred a batch of jam.

Once the cooking is complete, she fills the Mason jars to the brim and seals them. She enjoys hearing the pop when the seals are set.

Brady sells her jam for \$5 per half pint or \$8 for a pint.

During the season, Brady makes up to 30 batches of jam. Each batch produces about six half pints.

When the jams are entered in competition, judges look for uniformity throughout the jar, according to Brady. “One with big chunks in it wouldn’t do well at the fair,” she said.

The beginning

Brady began making jams around 1977. She learned how to do it from her mother Georgette Maas. “That was our Christmas present... jams for Christmas,” she said. “I’m starting to do that for my kids.”

She grew up on the farm in a large family with 12, including nine siblings, her parents and a grandparent, at the table. “You had to do everything you could to save money,” Brady recalls.

While making home-made jams and other food saved the family money, Brady has found another benefit. “It just tastes better,” she said.

She pointed out how some people often turn to alcohol as a stress reliever. “If I’m stressed, I like to come and cook,” Brady said. “I just feel good. It makes me happy. I get more enjoyment out of cooking.”

As she makes her jam, a sign hangs next to her with a reminder that



came from her mother’s journal: “In the end, the only monument that matters may be the work of love we’ve carved into the lives around us. We are not put into this world to sit still and know. We are here to act.”

She added by selling at the Farmer’s Market she doesn’t have to eat it all.

More than jam

Besides jam, Brady also bakes caramel rolls, cookies, rhubarb cake and lots of candy. Each fall she makes around 20,000 hand-wrapped caramels.

“My signature is caramels,” she said. “I make

them with my own vanilla. That’s why my caramels are better than others.”

She usually has friends and neighbors help her out with wrapping the caramels. She spends about five weeks making candy.

In 2012, Brady got her official candy label that she affixes to all her products.

Brady said it has gotten to the point where she has outgrown the size of her industrial-sized kitchen. “It’s too small,” she says. “Ideally, I would love it to be three to four times larger, especially when I’m in my candy mode.”

She has more time on

her hands to devote to jam and candy making after retiring last year from U.S. Bank.

Look for Brady’s jams, jellies, candy and butter entries at next week’s fair.

Brady won grand champion with black raspberry jelly at last year’s fair. If she wins, she actually returns the ribbons back to the fair.

“It’s fun to see if you win,” Brady said of entering the fair. “If I don’t get a ribbon, I’m clearly disappointed. If I win, I find myself saying, ‘I still have it.’ It confirms what you think... you’ve done a good job.”

Everything you'll need to know about the fair and more

The Steele County fairgrounds in Owatonna will be the place to be August 16 – 21, as we “Celebrate the Red, White and Blue in 2022.” The Steele County Free Fair, Minnesota’s biggest county fair, has over 5,000 free exhibits including 200 animals, the FFA Children’s Barnyard, the Great Outdoors Center, and the A-Z Petting Zoo, sponsored by Community Bank Owatonna and R & K Electric, to delight fairgoers. Free entertainment will be found on three outdoor stages and in the beer garden. In addition, 300 indoor commercial exhibits, over 200 outdoor vendors – including 100 food stands, and up to 40 thrilling rides on the Goldstar Amusements midway will be available daily.

Discover Steele County’s Past

Explore the fair in its early days in the Muckle Fair Museum and then wander over to the Village of Yesteryear and relive Steele County’s history in the village buildings. While in the village, take in the Gandy Company “Old Iron Show,” featuring a large display of antique tractors and small engines, plus take a seat at the Village Stage to enjoy a variety of music and entertainment. Great conversations of the county’s storied past are sure to happen in the Muckle Fair Museum

and the Village of Yesteryear.

Old Time Music

Fairgoers that enjoy listening to some great polka music will want to be in Fair Square Park on Thursday, August 18. The Wendinger Band will kick off the afternoon at 12:30 p.m. followed by the ipolka Band at 4 p.m. Friday at 12 p.m., the ever-popular Dan Stursa Band will be on stage playing some great old-time music, too.

The Dan Stursa Band will return to entertain fairgoers on Sunday, Aug. 21, at 1 p.m. in Ye Old Beer Garden. The Village Stage in the Village of Yesteryear will also feature toe-tapping old-time tunes throughout the week.

Outdoor Stages

The United Prairie Bank Stage in Fair Square Park, the Elmer Reseland Stage at KRFO Town Square and the Village Stage in the Village of Yesteryear will feature free entertainment each afternoon and evening throughout the fair. The Steele County Free Fair is proud to honor our veterans at the flag raising ceremony in Fair Square Park at 5 p.m. on Tuesday, Aug. 16, as we officially “Celebrate the Red, White and Blue In 2022.”

The United Prairie Bank Stage will feature some great entertainment starting on Tuesday with the Owatonna Community Band followed by the Steel Canyon Band fea-



turing Owatonna’s own Scott Rogness as the lead singer. Wednesday will feature the Power of 10 and Thursday evening the ever-popular Whiteside-walls will entertain with music of the 50s and 60s. Friday evening Janelle Kendall and the Perfect Storm, formally known as Walter’s Wheelhouse, will be on stage to entertain us with some country and rock music and Saturday evening Transit Authority will recreate the sounds of Chicago. Sunday afternoon entertainment will feature the Chubs Band out of Rochester followed by music by the Eclipse Band. The Owatonna High School Football/Cheerleader Rally will wrap up the entertainment on this stage at 7 p.m. on Sunday, Aug. 21.

The Elmer Reseland Stage in KRFO Town

Square will provide entertainment for children and adults alike. The Moo-gician will be returning with three shows of magic, juggling and comedy daily. New to the stage this year is Ready, Set, Grow a fun agricultural magic show for kids of all ages with comedy, magic, and puppets. KRFO will be bringing back its own version of the classic game show Deal or No Deal Wednesday through Friday at 7 p.m. and Saturday at 1 p.m.

KRFO Town Square is also home to The Kid’s Zone where a variety of activities, including a giant coloring mural and playground, can be enjoyed by children while adults watch their children play from the comfort of the picnic tables.

Shows Around the Fairgrounds
Home Town Credit

Union and RE/MAX Venture brings Jurassic Kingdom to the fair for three shows daily Wednesday through Sunday at 2, 5 and 8 p.m. Jurassic Kingdom features life size dinosaur puppets Blue, their new dinosaur; Terry, the talking, comical Pterodactyl; Jack – their 2-month-old Brontosaurus; Sarah – their newborn Triceratops; Lucy – their 5-year-old full-grown Velociraptor; and Sparky a 2-year-old T-Rex.

The American Dairy Association and the Southwest Dairy Farmers brings the Mobile Dairy Classroom to the fair. The Mobile Dairy Classroom features a 32-foot classroom featuring a fully operational milking parlor. The classroom carries a live cow, milking equipment and highly trained instructor for the presentation.

Alexander Lumber Company brings to the fair the Robinson Carving Company. The Robinson family has been doing sculptures for the past two decades with their chainsaws. They will be doing 3 – 4 shows daily with a new sculpture being created at each show.

The All-Star Stunt Dogs Show, sponsored by Fleet Farm, Bushel Boy, Cargill, Farmer’s Feed and Pet Supply and Thrivent, is a must see show that will entertain people of all ages. From

back flips, handstands, big air stunts, to amazing tricks; these dogs are thrilling the nation! Shows daily at 12, 3 and 6 p.m. Wednesday through Sunday.

Deml Heating and Air Conditioning and House Auto Group brings to the fair The Otter Adventure. Watch the otters as they swim, play, and provide non-stop entertainment. Shows daily at 1, 4 and 7 p.m. Wednesday – Sunday.

The Great Outdoors Center

The National Eagle Center will be in the Great Outdoors Center on Thursday and Saturday,

Aug. 18 and 20. The National Eagle Center of Wabasha will have representatives present to conduct presentations and information about eagles on Thursday from 12–6 p.m. and Saturday from noon – 4 p.m.

Happy Tails Pet Store will line the walls of the Great Outdoors Center with an impressive display of reptiles, such as snakes, geckos, fish and many other species.

Child I.D. Tags

Parents, daycare providers and others with young children can pick up free child ID tags at the Sheriff’s Office in the Muckle Building near Fair Square Park. In the event a child gets separated from you, the I.D. tags are invaluable in reuniting the child with their caring adult.

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RED, WHITE & BLUE PHOTO CONTEST

Send in your BEST photos of the Steele County Free Fair during this year's fair and you could win a prize!

FIRST PLACE:

One pair of Chanhassen Dinner
Theatre Tickets (\$150 value)

SECOND PLACE:

Two pairs of Renaissance
Festival Tickets (\$108 value)

THIRD PLACE:

One-year subscription to
Steele County Times (\$49 value)

PLUS ADDED BONUS:

First 6 people to submit entries will receive a FREE
3-month subscription to the Times... just for entering!



Rules:

- 1. Submit your photography (black and white or color) taken at the 2022 Steele County Free Fair in Owatonna. Email to: news@steelecountytimes.com with "2022 Fair Photo" in the subject line. (Please include your name, address, phone and photo information, if emailing). You can also mail to Steele County Times • P.O. Box 247 • Blooming Prairie, MN 55917 or drop off at either the Blooming Prairie office or Owatonna office (109 W. Rose St.) Please include the contest entry below.
- 2. Entries must be received by Friday, Sept. 2, 2022. One entry per household. Three winners will be chosen by a panel of judges. Decision by the judges is final.
- 3. Winner's photographs will be featured in upcoming edition of Steele County Times and maybe used on social media. They may also appear in other promotional pieces by the newspaper.
- 4. Employees of the newspaper and their immediate families are not eligible. Must be 14 years of age or older to enter.



STEELE COUNTY FREE FAIR PHOTO CONTEST

NAME: _____

ADDRESS: _____

CITY: _____

PHONE: _____

DESCRIPTION OF PHOTO: _____

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Celebrate The Red, White and Blue in 2022!

August 16th - 21st

Steele County Free Fair

Steele County Free Fair

Tuesday, Aug. 16

Grandstand

6 p.m. Classic Antique Tractor Pull

Fair Square Stage

3 p.m. Dave Granlund
 5 p.m. Flag Raising Ceremony
 6 p.m. Owatonna Community Band
 7:30 p.m. Steel Canyon Band

Elmer Reseland Stage

5 p.m. Hero Bean Bags
 6 p.m. Moogician
 7:15 p.m. Ready, Set, Grow

Village of Yesteryear Stage

6 p.m. Todd & Roger Uptadel

Ye Olde Beer Garden

8:30 p.m. Arch Allies

Wednesday, Aug. 17

Grandstand

8 p.m. Maddie & Tae Concert

Fair Square Stage

12 p.m. Branded
 3:15 p.m. UPSD Dance Studio
 4:15 p.m. Styx of Fury
 5:15 p.m. Black Dog Road
 7:30 p.m. Power of 10

Elmer Reseland Stage

11:20 a.m. Women's Nail Driving
 12 p.m. Moogician
 1 p.m. Ready, Set, Grow
 2 p.m. Moogician
 3 p.m. Ready, Set, Grow
 4 p.m. Moogician
 5:05 p.m. Hero Bean Bags
 5:45 p.m. Ready, Set, Grow
 7 p.m. Deal or No Deal

Village of Yesteryear Stage

12 p.m. Nate & Virginia Page
 3 p.m. Karen Kasper
 6 p.m. Lights of Litomysl

Ye Olde Beer Garden

8:30 p.m. Johnny Holm

Thursday, Aug. 18

Senior Day

Grandstand

8 p.m. Hairball Concert

Fair Square Stage

11:30 a.m. Senior Citizen Recognition
 12:30 p.m. Wendinger Band
 4 p.m. The ipolka Band
 8 p.m. The Whitesidewalls

Elmer Reseland Stage

12 p.m. Moogician
 1:20 p.m. Women's Nail Driving
 2 p.m. Ready, Set, Grow
 3 p.m. Moogician
 4 p.m. Ready, Set, Grow
 5:05 p.m. Hero Bean Bags
 5:45 p.m. Ready, Set, Grow
 7 p.m. Deal or No Deal

Village of Yesteryear Stage

12 p.m. Dan Sturza Band
 3 p.m. Owatonna String Ensemble
 6 p.m. Peter Klug

Ye Olde Beer Garden

8:30 p.m. Street Talk

Friday, Aug. 19

Grandstand

8 p.m. Joe Nichols Concert

Fair Square Stage

11 a.m. Rad Zoo
 12 p.m. Dan Stursa Band
 2:45 p.m. Blue Dream
 6 p.m. Just Friends
 8 p.m. Janelle Kendall and the Perfect Storm

Elmer Reseland Stage

12 p.m. Moogician
 1:20 p.m. Women's Nail Driving
 2 p.m. Ready, Set, Grow
 3:15 p.m. Moogician
 4 p.m. Ready, Set, Grow
 5:05 p.m. Hero Bean Bags
 5:45 p.m. Moogician
 7 p.m. Deal or No Deal

Village of Yesteryear Stage

12 p.m. Alan O'Malley-Larson
 3 p.m. The ipolka Band
 6 p.m. Just Kidding

Ye Olde Beer Garden

3 p.m. Travis Thamert
 8:30 p.m. Shag

Saturday, Aug. 20

Grandstand

7:30 p.m. Bulls-N-Barrels

Fair Square Stage

11 a.m. Dee Miller
 1:15 p.m. Scottie Miller Band
 3:45 p.m. Harrison Street Band
 6:15 p.m. White Wolf
 8 p.m. Transit Authority

Elmer Reseland Stage

12 p.m. Moogician
 1 p.m. Deal or No Deal
 2:15 p.m. Ready, Set, Grow

3:15 p.m.

Moogician

4 p.m.

Ready, Set, Grow

5:05 p.m.

Hero Bean Bags

5:45 p.m.

Moogician

7 p.m.

Ready, Set, Grow

Village of Yesteryear Stage

12 p.m. Led Penny
 3 p.m. Sonrise- Christian
 6 p.m. OHS Drum and Bugle Corp.

Ye Olde Beer Garden

3 p.m. Led Penny
 8:30 p.m. Mason Dixon Line

Sunday, Aug. 21

Grandstand

2 p.m. Demo Derby

Fair Square Stage

11 a.m. Community Church Service
 12:15 p.m. Tai Kwon Do
 1:15 p.m. Eclipse
 4 p.m. The Chubs
 6:30 p.m. United Way
 7 p.m. Owatonna Football Team

Elmer Reseland Stage

12:30 p.m. Moogician
 1 p.m. High School Robotics
 3:15 p.m. Ready, Set, Grow
 4:15 p.m. Moogician
 5:15 p.m. Ready, Set, Grow

Village of Yesteryear Stage

9:30 a.m. Traditional Church Service
 12 p.m. Grass Run Band- Blue Grass
 3 p.m. Dunnell Lenort

Ye Olde Beer Garden

1 p.m. Dan Stursa Band
 6:30 p.m. The White Keys



Steele County Free Fair
2021 Community Campaign Leader

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Sheriff Lon Thiele		My Opponent
Law Enforcement Licensed Years	32 Years	24 Years
Education/Professional Development	College - Hibbing, AAS • Northwestern University SPSC Grant Writing IPTM (Florida) • FBI-LEEDA Trilogy FBI North Central States LEEDS MN Chief Law Enforcement Officer CLEO Academy National Sheriff's Institute • National Institute of Corrections National Center for Missing & Exploited Children Blandin Community Leadership FEMA Incident Command & Staff Training	College - Mankato, AAS
Supervisory/Management Experience	Sheriff • Past Chief of Police • Past Sergeant Past SWAT Team Commander	
Past Agency Duties/Assignments	Union Steward (Sergeants) • POR Coordinator Field Training Officer • Firearms Instructor Defensive Tactics Instructor • Critical Incident Response Team Safe and Sober Coordinator • Vehicle Forfeiture Coordinator Training Coordinator • SWAT Team Scheduling Coordinator	Union Steward (Deputy) • POR Assignment Resigned from FTO • Resigned from Firearms
Board/Community Involvement	FBI-LEEDA Executive Board • MN Sheriff's Association Executive Board CCA (Probation) Advisory Board • BP Community Foundation Board Steele County Salvation Army • Steele/Rice Operations Committee MN Sheriff's Association Jail Oversight Committee Criminal Justice Committee • Beyond the Yellow Ribbon Committee Steele County Humane Society • Courthouse Security Committee Have a Safe Summer Committee • SE Regional Advisory Committee Steele Toward Zero Deaths Coalition • Owatonna Rotary Riverland Criminal Justice Advisory Board	
Programs Implemented For Steele County	Take it to the Box • Project Lifesaver Operation Child ID • K-9 Unit School Resource Officer (Medford) • Bicycle Safety Mock Car Crashes • Catalytic Converter Program Posse Search and Rescue Training SCFF Operation Extra Eyes- Fair Logistics • Vests to Ukraine	
Incident Command Experience	Tornadoes • Train Derailment • Blizzard Vortex • SWAT Search & Rescue • Steele County Fair • Hope Bank Robbery Plane Crash • Owatonna Protests • Floods and Road Closures	

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RE-ELECT SHERIFF LON THIELE IN NOVEMBER

Prepared and Paid for by Citizens to Re-Elect Lon Thiele for Sheriff - Owatonna, MN