



**IOWA STATE FAIR
BLUE RIBBON
FOUNDATION**

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Putney Announces Retirement from Blue Ribbon Foundation

DES MOINES, IA - John Putney, Executive Director of The Iowa State Fair Blue Ribbon Foundation since its beginning in 1993, has announced his retirement effective March 2014. The Foundation has generated more than \$95 million for improvements to the Fairgrounds facilities during its 20 years. Putney will remain on staff to transition his duties to Peter Cownie who will join the Foundation August 1.

"I have been honored and grateful for the opportunity to help renovate and preserve this great institution for generations to come," Putney said. "I am extremely happy that Peter Cownie has been selected as the new Executive Director of the Blue Ribbon Foundation."

Putney, a native of Gladbrook and an Iowa State University alum, has been an avid participant in the Iowa State Fair for many years as an exhibitor, President of the Sale of Champions, and Beef Superintendent. However, his greatest legacy will be spearheading the campaign to renovate and restore the historic Iowa State Fairgrounds. His efforts have culminated in the renovation and construction of 30 Fairgrounds facilities, ranging from wiring and roofing to the complete reconstruction of the Varied Industries Building and the construction of the Jacobson Exhibition Center.

The Foundation began with the goal of raising money for the Fairgrounds' deteriorating facilities. Along the way, Putney's successful fundraising efforts have changed the face of the Fairgrounds. Projects like the Varied Industries Building built in 1911 and completely reconstructed from 2000-2002, set the new standard for Fairgrounds facilities. The fully-enclosed multi-use facility became the catalyst for numerous projects including the state-of-the-art Jacobson Exhibition Center and re-development of the southwest portion of the Fairgrounds.

Iowa State Fair CEO/Manager Gary Slater said, "John Putney's work not only renovated and constructed buildings; it also spurred new interest in the Fairgrounds as a rental facility and re-established the Iowa State Fair as one of the world's must-see events."

Cownie joins the Iowa State Fair Blue Ribbon Foundation from Junior Achievement of Central Iowa where he served as President. He led the Des Moines nonprofit organization and its fundraising efforts for 5 1/2 years. In 2008, Cownie was elected to his first term in the Iowa House of Representatives and has since won re-election to his third term representing District 42 which includes portions of Polk and Warren Counties.

The Des Moines native looks forward to his new role, "I want to thank John Putney for the unprecedented work he has done for the historic Iowa State Fairgrounds and the people of Iowa. His legacy leaves an indelible mark on the Fairgrounds for future generations of Fairgoers to enjoy, and I look forward to continuing his work."

The graduate of Dowling High School in West Des Moines and the University of Virginia received his Masters in Public Administration from Drake University. Cownie also volunteers and serves his community in numerous ways and chairs several foundations and boards. He and his wife Mary have one son.

The Blue Ribbon Foundation is a non-profit 501(c)3 organization. Since its inception in 1993, the Foundation has generated more than \$95 million for renovations and improvements to the Iowa State Fairgrounds.

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