



IOWA STATE FAIR  
BLUE RIBBON  
FOUNDATION

# NEWS

SUMMER 2026

## A New **Perspective**

My connection to the Iowa State Fair began early. Like many Fairgoers, my Fair memories span years of projects, events, and time spent on the Fairgrounds each August. I have shown 4-H exhibits since 4th grade, worked in the 4-H Exhibits Building, volunteered at the Fair, and served as the Public Relations intern for the Iowa State Fair Blue Ribbon Foundation in 2022.

In December, I had the opportunity to return to the Blue Ribbon Foundation as the full-time Development Manager. While the Iowa State Fair is not new to me, stepping into this role has given me a new perspective on a place I have known most of my life.

In my first seven months, I have seen how much work goes into maintaining and improving the Fairgrounds year-round. Now that I am working more closely with the volunteer program and the Corndog Kickoff Benefit Auction, I have gained a deeper understanding of how much planning happens before the Fair begins. What once felt like personal traditions or experiences I took for granted,

I now recognize as the result of many people working behind the scenes to make the Fair possible, long before most visitors see the outcome.

I have also gained a different perspective on “change” at the Fair. As a visitor, new additions and improvements can seem simple or immediate. I now see how intentional those changes really are and how carefully they are made alongside a commitment to preserving what Iowans already know and love.

Change at the Fair is taken seriously and comes from months — even years — of planning, coordination, and people who care deeply about getting it right. Even in my short time here, I have seen the incredible impact donors make in improving the historic Iowa State Fairgrounds. Their support allows the Blue Ribbon Foundation to continue projects that keep the Fair moving forward while protecting the traditions that make it so meaningful to generations of Iowans.

That shift in perspective has followed me outside of work as well. Along with starting this new role, I recently moved from

Ames to Des Moines. It has been a season of transition, both personally and professionally, making the idea of change more present and welcome in everyday life.

The Fair will always continue to evolve in visible ways, but its role as a gathering place and tradition for Iowans remains constant. Experiencing the behind-the-scenes work has caused the biggest shift in my perspective, and it is what I will continue to appreciate most. And to think I am only a few months in! I am grateful and excited to officially be part of the team that helps nurture the Iowa State Fairgrounds for future generations.



**Brooklin Border**  
Development Manager

# 2026 Merchandise Pre-Order



## Iowa State Fair Plaque: As American As...

From apple pie and livestock to unforgettable Fair foods, the Iowa State Fair is filled with traditions that are truly “As American As...” everything we love about Iowa and the Fair itself! This limited edition 7”x7” wood plaque created by Sticks, beautifully captures those iconic memories and timeless traditions. More than anything, it celebrates the moments, memories, and spirit that bring generations together at the Iowa State Fair.

## Pottery: Snack Bowl

Created in partnership with the Central Academy Potters of Des Moines Public Schools, the 2026 Iowa State Fair commemorative pottery piece is a handcrafted Snack Bowl. Designed by the students, the unique piece features a smaller bowl connected to a larger bowl — perfect for serving your favorite appetizers and snacks. Whether displayed as part of your Iowa State Fair pottery collection or used during family gatherings, this functional keepsake is sure to become a cherished favorite.



## 23rd Edition Cookbook

This cookbook features select ribbon-winning recipes from the 2024 and 2025 Iowa State Fairs. Delicious appetizers, snacks, side dishes, main dishes, breads, desserts, and more are just waiting to be made and enjoyed in your kitchen.

**Advance Merchandise  
Order Form**

### Please reserve:

- Pottery: Snack Bowl — \$45
- Iowa State Fair Plaque: As American As... — \$145
- Iowa State Fair 23rd Edition Cookbook — \$20

**QTY**    **Total**

\_\_\_\_\_

### All orders will be shipped:

- Shipping & handling rate for one item \$12.00
- \$1 extra for each additional item shipped \_\_\_\_\_
- One order that ships to multiple locations — \$12.00 per location \_\_\_\_\_

**TOTAL** \_\_\_\_\_

- My check, payable to the Blue Ribbon Foundation, is enclosed.
- Please charge to my Mastercard/Visa.

Card # \_\_\_\_\_ Exp. Date \_\_\_\_\_ Sec. Code \_\_\_\_\_

Signature \_\_\_\_\_

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Address (No P.O. Boxes) \_\_\_\_\_

City \_\_\_\_\_ State \_\_\_\_\_ ZIP \_\_\_\_\_

Phone Number \_\_\_\_\_

Email \_\_\_\_\_

Please clip & send with payment to:

**Iowa State Fair Blue Ribbon Foundation** • P.O. Box 57130, Des Moines, IA 50317 or call: 1-800-450-3732

To reserve your 2026 Iowa State Fair pottery piece, plaque, or cookbook, please fill out and return this form, or call 515-262-3111 ext. 371. Currently, online orders are not available for 2026 merchandise. To help ensure availability, we recommend ordering before August 1, as demand is high after that date.

**All orders will be shipped to the address you provide.**

# 2026 *Corndog Kickoff*

The Iowa State Fair brings people together to celebrate agriculture, innovation, creativity, and community. The Blue Ribbon Foundation has always believed Iowa is home to the greatest State Fair, and we're proud to continue our patriotic traditions as our nation celebrates its 250th anniversary.

Set for Saturday, July 11, the Corndog Kickoff will take place in the William C. Knapp Varied Industries Building and serve as a red, white, and blue celebration. Your generosity helps fund vital infrastructure improvements on the historic Iowa State Fairgrounds.

Tickets are still available for \$125 and can be purchased at the door on the night of the event. Tickets include a complimentary photo, food and drink, fireworks, Sky Glider rides, and more! Doors to the William C. Knapp Varied Industries Building on the Fairgrounds open at 6:30 PM.

Information about auction packages, registering to bid and the event itself can be found at [www.BlueRibbonFoundation.org](http://www.BlueRibbonFoundation.org). The silent auction opens for bidding on Friday, July 10 at 10 AM and will close on Saturday, July 11 at 8:30 PM.

A special thanks to all Corndog Kickoff patrons, volunteers, concessionaires, auction donors, and guests who make this event possible. Each participant plays a vital role in carrying forward the proud tradition of preserving and strengthening our treasured Iowa State Fairgrounds for generations to come.

## *Auction Highlights:*

### Lainey Wilson in Concert

Enjoy an unforgettable night at Lainey Wilson's sold-out concert on Sunday, August 16! Your four tickets are in Section C10, Row 28, Seats 11 to 14. Gate admission for four and a parking pass are included.

### An Amalfi Coast Getaway

Enjoy a five-night stay at a stunning luxury villa on Italy's Amalfi Coast, nestled in the historic seaside village of Praiano.

- The cliffside villa accommodates up to eight guests with four elegant suites, each with an en suite bath.
- Indulge in a fully curated culinary experience with your personal, in-villa chef preparing daily breakfast, plus welcome and farewell dinners, a pizza night, and a hands-on cooking class.
- Unwind on a two-hour private sunset boat tour along the coast.
- A dedicated travel concierge will assist with planning your itinerary, reservations, and recommendations for a truly effortless, once-in-a-lifetime vacation.



## **\$10,000 Best of Show**

*The Doerring Family*

## **\$7,500 Grand Champion**

*Tom & Julie Jackowski*

*Don & Cheryl Timmins*



## **\$5,000 Champion**

*Sheri Avis Horner  
Benskin Family  
Caren Clevenger /  
Iowa Realty  
Patty & Jim Cownie*

*Daniels Filter Service  
Doug & Heather Den Adel  
Denton Homes &  
Carmel Developments  
John & Barb Hagie*

*Hot Spring Spas  
Susan Knapp Family  
Steve & Cathy Lacy  
Mark & Kathy Larson  
McAninch Corporation*

*MidAmerican Energy  
Janis Ruan  
The University of Iowa  
Vision Electric LLC  
West Bank*



## \$2,000 Blue Ribbon

Greg & Andrea Abel  
Air-Con Mechanical Corp.  
Alliant Energy  
Ankeny Sanitation  
Jerry & Nancy Armstrong  
Baker Group  
Richard & Sharon Bender  
Jan Berlin  
Blue Ribbon Bar & Eatery  
Boles, Witosky, Stewart Law  
Bob Brown Chevrolet  
Denise Bradfield  
Terry & Chris Branstad  
Randy Brown  
Brown Winick  
Cynthia Brun  
Buse & Ostrander Families  
Campbell's Concessions &  
The Depot  
Randy Campbell  
Casey's  
Catch Des Moines  
Central Bank

Cerne Calcium Company  
Fred & Judy Chabot  
Jeff Chelesvig  
Ken Cheyne  
Cookies BBQ  
Mike & Julie Coppola  
Mary & Peter Cownie  
Darling Ingredients Inc.  
Delta Dental of Iowa  
Steve & Barb Determan  
Dave & Kelly Donato  
Brad & Alison Duffy  
Denny & Candy Elwell  
Farmers Mutual Hail Ins. Co.  
Scott & Lori Ferris  
First Interstate Bank  
Larry Fleck & Son Trucking  
Jane Forbes  
Fuller Petroleum Service  
Kathryn Griffin  
Todd & Wendy Hagen  
Hansen Company, Inc.  
Chuck & Libby Hartlieb

Mark & Ginny Haviland  
Hy-Vee  
Iwig Family  
Dwight & Ruth Johnston  
Joseph's Jewelers  
Mark & Christy Joyce  
Tom & Robin Jurgens  
K/O Architects  
Bill & Tonya Kimberley  
Kollmorgen, Schlue &  
Zahradnik, PC  
Joesph & Ruth Lakers  
Mike & Carri Lauterbach  
Living Des Moines  
Bill & Julie Marlin  
John & April Marmon  
Steve McMenamin  
Mediacom  
Brady & Julie Meldrem  
George & Deb Milligan  
Chris & Amy Murray  
Mark & Jill Oman  
P&P Concrete  
Brenda Person  
Marcus & Angela Pitts

Deb Pulver  
John & Emily Putney  
Raccoon Valley Bank  
Russ & Debbie Richardson  
Rockwise Wealth Partners  
Rueters  
Charles & Melinda Ruperto  
Ryan Companies  
Shawn Sabin & Paul Barnds  
David & Linda Schinckel  
Schuessler Enterprises  
Seprio, LLC  
Steel Structures  
Barry & Jackie Tewes  
The Dental Practice  
The Double Cowboys  
The Rib Shack  
The Scale Guy  
Van Der Kamp Homes  
Van Wyk State Farm  
Georgia Van Gundy  
Weatherwax Family  
Keith & Debra Welling  
Gary & Sandi Yates  
Kelly Zelinsky

## \$500 Red Ribbon

David & Liz Adelman  
AE Dairy  
All Pets Animal Hospital  
Aluminum Distributors  
Curtis & Diane Claeys  
Ken & Diane Clark  
Combined Systems  
Technology  
Paul & Michelle Cownie  
Dermatology PC

Rob & Lizzy Dixon  
Doll Distributing  
Leloie Duteemple  
Howard & Lynn Hagen  
Siobhan Harman  
Rich & Sarah Hein  
Matt & Ali Hinch  
Holzworth Construction  
Carolyn Hove  
J. Pettiecord, Inc.

Chuck & Jaina Johnson  
James Kopel  
Koshy Holdings LLC  
Jerry & Vicki Lage  
LaDonna & Rich Matthes  
Mike & Megan Milligan  
Gerry & Mary Lou Neugent  
OriGen Wealth Management  
Jeremy & Kelsi Parsons  
Andy Piro

Nick & Jill Ryan  
Sarah & Paul Rypma  
Tim & Lindsey Rypma  
Jake & Bridget Shapansky  
Dan & Patty Skokan  
Gary & Mary Slater  
Speas Farms  
The Best Around  
Bill Tiffany  
Torgerson Excavating, Inc.

## \$250 White Ribbon

Edye Beckerman  
Mark Bohner  
Tom Brien  
Karen Brockelsby  
Alan & Deb Brown  
Eric & Misha Campbell  
Dave Caris & Hallie Still-Caris  
Grant & Tennie Carlson  
Jimmy & Gretchen Centers  
Kevin & Mary Emge  
Darwin & Jan Gaudian  
John & Kathy Harms  
Patrick & Avery Harshman  
Howard & Sandra Hecht

Nate & Niki Hopwood  
Jarrod & Carol Horning  
Pat & Melody Hunter  
Roger & Debbie Iverson  
Brian & JoAnn Johnson  
Joseph Jones  
Jeff & Jodi King  
Izaah & Jenna Knox  
Pat & Mary Knueven  
John & Sheila Laing  
Fred & Joyce Lock  
M & K Concessions  
Gary & Linda McConnell  
Ryan & Lacy McGriff

Jerry & Randall Parkin  
Kay Peiffer  
Joe & Kara Pollpeter  
Mark & Linda Putney  
Martin & Jo Reynolds  
Dawn Roberts  
Tom & Catherine Sands  
VerDon & Donna Schmidt  
Todd Schomburg & Jomarie  
Tucci  
Eric & Melissa Shafer  
Mel & Linda Shivers  
Bob & Cherie Shreck  
Ross & Shirley Stafford

Keith & Cindy Steffens  
Connie Taylor  
The Showtimes, Inc.  
C.W. & Kay Thomas  
Bob & Amy Tursi  
Doran & Cora Van Rheenens  
Norman & Mary Van Zante  
Tom & Christie Vilsack  
Jarred & Leslie Whitfield  
Carla Wood  
Louie & Deb Zumbach

# 2026 Merchandise Highlights

The Blue Ribbon Foundation offers official Iowa State Fair souvenirs, with all proceeds supporting its mission to renovate and preserve the historic Fairgrounds.

Along with the featured items below, a wide selection of apparel, collectibles, and more will be available at the official Iowa State Fair Souvenir Store, located in the Robert G. Horner and Sheri Avis Horner Service Center during the Fair, August 13-23. You can also find merchandise booths in the Agriculture Building, Cattle Barn, Varied Industries Building, Elwell Family Food Center, and Museum.

**Thank you for shopping and supporting the Blue Ribbon Foundation!**



**Lapel Pin:** We've always believed Iowa is home to the greatest State Fair, and we're proud to continue our patriotic American traditions as we celebrate America's 250th birthday.

**Charms:** "Meet ya' at the Pepsi Clock" is still a common phrase for families and friends to exchange as the meet up spot during a busy day exploring the Fairgrounds. Display this icon on your charm bracelet along with the 2026 "Fair Spirit" logo charm.

**Ornament:** From the Big Boar to the baby piglets born in the Animal Learning Center, Iowa is proud to be the swine capital of the world. The Hampshire pig is represented in this year's ornament, but all breeds are showcased with pride.

**Isabel Bloom Sculpture:** This plaque features a draft horse. The Iowa State Fair is known for its distinguished competitions, including the six-horse hitch show, where teams travel across the country to compete.

**Butter Cow Golf Head Cover:** The perfect addition to your golf bag, the driver cover is an adorable version of the Butter Cow. Your game will be as smooth as butter!

**Sticks Ornament:** The ornament showcases the historic Iowa State Fair Horse Barn and celebrates its complete renovation in 2026 — ready to stand tall for another 100 years.

**Iowa State FAIROPOLY:** Enjoy Iowa State Fair excitement year-round when you play Iowa State FAIROPOLY. This fun, strategic board game is inspired by the classic property trading game you know and love.

# Support the **Livestock Barns**



The livestock barns are a cornerstone of the Iowa State Fair experience, serving as the place where exhibitors showcase their hard work, dedication, and talents each August. Supporting youth, agriculture, and livestock traditions remains central to the mission of the Iowa State Fair.

The “Back the Barns” campaign invites supporters of Iowa agriculture to invest in the future of the historic livestock barns at the Iowa State Fairgrounds. Contributions to the campaign help preserve these important facilities while improving the experience for exhibitors, families, and Fairgoers for years to come.

In appreciation of their support, donors will receive a commemorative belt buckle recognizing their commitment to preserving the Fairgrounds and encouraging the next generation of Iowa agricultural leaders.



**Horse Barn:** The two-year, \$13.1 million renovation project provides extensive updates and improvements to the facility while preserving its historic character. Enhancements include masonry, sheet metal, and roofing restoration; exterior and interior painting; and the repair and replacement of exterior doors and windows. The project includes a new concrete floor with radiant heat, offices relocated to the west end, remodeled existing restrooms, and added restrooms designed to meet current accessibility standards. Additional upgrades include a relocated covered outdoor wash rack, a new interior wash rack area, new portable stalls, enhanced ventilation, updated electrical service and lighting, and a new fire suppression system.

**Sheep Barn:** This spring, the Iowa State Fair Operations Team completed a four-day installation project in the Sheep Barn, adding a new pen layout that will improve both capacity and efficiency for future livestock events. Over the course of the project, the team installed new sheep pens throughout the eastern portion of the barn, increasing the total pen count by more than sixty. This added capacity will create more flexibility when preparing for shows and events that use the Sheep Barn, while also helping make better use of the available space. By improving how the pens are arranged and how staff can move through the barn, the team will be able to work more efficiently when it comes time to tear down, clean, and reset the space.



**Cattle Barn:** A new electrical distribution building was constructed on the north side of the barn, providing space for new electrical equipment as well as electrical and maintenance storage. Once the equipment arrives, Phase 2 for the Cattle Barn will include updating the building’s electrical system.

**Swine Barn:** Improvements in this first phase included remodeling the west office, updating the west women’s restroom to comply with current accessibility standards, and building a new men’s, women’s, and family restroom on the east end of the barn. The next phase of the Swine Barn’s \$19.1 million project will begin after the 2026 Iowa State Fair.



**Thank you to the many donors who are Backing Our Barns. Their generosity helps enhance the Livestock Barns for exhibitors, staff, event partners, and Fairgoers who use and enjoy these facilities throughout the year.**

**Learn how you can support this project.**



# Smart Giving Choices for Your Stage of Life

The things you care about most can shift as you journey through life. As you grow and change, you can use our road map to help you make smart choices — no matter your season of life!

## **In Your 50s:**

You may be considering whether your investments and savings will carry you through retirement. Many loyal supporters like you also start to think about deepening their commitment to the Iowa State Fair Blue Ribbon Foundation around this time.

### **Choose Your Best Approach**

- Preserve your values through your will or living trust: With as little as one sentence, you can share your love for Fairgrounds improvements with future generations. Whether you give a set amount or a percentage of your estate, your kindness will have an extraordinary impact on the historic buildings and grounds.
- Set up a Donor Advised Fund (DAF): This popular option is like a charitable savings account and may come with tax benefits. You can use it to make an immediate impact by recommending a grant to us now, or to make future or recurring grants.

## **In Your 60s:**

Does your estate plan reflect any life changes, such as retirement, an empty nest or caring for your parents? Now is a great time to review your important documents to ensure they align with your current situation and your long-term goals. Like many others, you may want to consider creating a gift that boosts your income and your investment in our mission.

### **Choose Your Best Approach**

- Establish a gift that pays you income: You have several options to create a steady stream of lifetime income for yourself or a loved one. What's left of your gift will support our organization.
- Name us as a beneficiary: Your retirement plan or a life insurance policy you no longer need can easily be transformed into an impactful gift that costs you nothing today. You can contact your plan administrator to get started or complete an online form.

## **In Your 70s:**

Are you looking for meaningful ways to give back? Consider volunteering your time to support your community and the causes you love. You also have many financial options to choose from that help extend your dedication and your budget.

### **Choose Your Best Approach**

- Make a difference today with your IRA: If you are 70½ or older, you can give any amount up to \$111,000 from your IRA in 2026 directly to our organization without having to pay income taxes on the money.
- Boost your income with a legacy IRA: Did you know you can establish a gift that pays you a fixed income for life using a one-time distribution of up to \$55,000 from your IRA? Special rules apply, so contact your financial planner to see if this option is right for you.

## **In Your 80s, 90s and Beyond:**

Think about how you would like to be remembered. Consider making or repeating any of the gifts mentioned to continue growing your love for the Blue Ribbon Foundation. Do what makes you happy — you've earned it!

### **Choose Your Best Approach**

- Create a legacy letter: Preserve your life story and express your eternal values through a written letter or recording that your loved ones will treasure.
- Share your plans: Let us know if you are planning any of these legacy gifts. By sharing your intentions, you help us honor your wishes and express our gratitude personally. Contact us today so we can ensure your legacy is celebrated.

## **What Is Right for You?**

We are ready to help you explore which giving options best fit your personal circumstances. Please contact Brooklin Border at 515-262-3111 Ext. 370 or Brooklin@BlueRibbonFoundation.org to get started!

*The information contained herein was accurate at the time of printing. The information in this publication is not intended as legal or tax advice. For such advice, please consult an attorney or tax advisor. Figures cited in any examples are for illustrative purposes only. References to tax rates include federal taxes only and are subject to change. State law may further impact your individual results.*

# Mailbox

"I am happy to contribute to the Back the Barns fundraising campaign in support of the renovations of the Livestock Barns. My very first donation to the Blue Ribbon Foundation was in 1993 to help replace trees in the campgrounds. Thank you to the Foundation for your valuable preservation efforts over all these years."

*Alice Draper*

GRUNDY CENTER, IA

## NEED TO CONTACT US?

### CALL

515-262-3111 Ext. 371

### EMAIL

[Info@BlueRibbonFoundation.org](mailto:Info@BlueRibbonFoundation.org)

### MAIL

P.O. Box 57130  
Des Moines, IA 50317

[WWW.BLUERIBBONFOUNDATION.ORG](http://WWW.BLUERIBBONFOUNDATION.ORG)



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# Woodcarvers' Auction

If you hear the buzz of chainsaws during the 2026 Iowa State Fair, chances are you've found the popular woodcarving demonstrations featuring talented artists Gary Keenan, T.J. Jenkins, and Clint Henik.

Fairgoers can watch these incredible creations come to life on Expo Hill as the artists carve four times daily during the Fair, August 13-23, at 10 AM, 12 PM, 3:30 PM, and 5:30 PM. From the first cut to the final detail, audiences of all ages will be amazed by the skill, creativity, and entertainment these chainsaw artists bring to the Fairgrounds.

Keenan, Jenkins, and Henik have traveled across the country showcasing their talents at city, county, and state fairs, earning recognition as both master craftsmen and crowd-pleasing entertainers. Over the years, they have transformed pine, oak, walnut, and elm logs into remarkable works of art, including animals such as eagles, bears, and other wildlife. Their creativity also shines through with unique carvings inspired by pop culture and special themes, including Caitlin Clark, the Lombardi Trophy, pirates, and even Santa Claus.

Fairgoers have the opportunity to take home these one-of-a-kind creations through the

Iowa State Fair Blue Ribbon Foundation Woodcarvers' Auction. The auction will once again be offered as a hybrid event featuring both in-person and online bidding opportunities.

The live auction will begin at 4 PM on Sunday, August 23, at the Penningroth Sale Ring inside the John & Emily Putney Family Cattle Barn. (Please note the change in start time from 3:30 PM in 2025 to 4 PM in 2026.) A selection of carvings will also be available for online bidding beginning Saturday, August 22, at 10 AM through Sunday, August 23, at 5:30 PM.

Since 1993, proceeds from the Woodcarvers' Auction have benefited the Blue Ribbon Foundation, raising more than \$1 million to support improvements and preservation projects across the historic Iowa State Fairgrounds. A special thank you to Al Conover and the ringmen for assisting with the auction year after year.

The auction remains one of many fundraising efforts coordinated by the Foundation to enhance the Fairgrounds for future generations. Thank you to the hundreds of donors who have helped make the Woodcarvers' Auction a longtime success.

