

## **FRIEND OF THE FAIR AWARD**

**This award recognizes an important individual, group or business for its outstanding contributions to support the fair industry and the Wisconsin Association of Fairs. This contribution can be over several years or specifically the past year. The award winner is chosen by the WAF Board of Directors.**

### **FRIEND OF THE FAIR: DEB GOTLIBSON**

Our first Friend of the Fair pays tribute to a lady that has played several key roles in the success of WAF. This award really highlights her dedication and passion for the fair industry and the WAF community. Her ability to lead through challenging times, build connections, and continuously learn and grow speaks volumes about her character and contributions.

As WAF President during the pandemic, Deb Gotlibson served an extra year and worked tirelessly with our Executive Director to adapt to the industry's changes. She did so with calmness and an understanding knowing how each decision impacted our members.

Currently off the WAF board, Deb serves on the Fairest of the Fairs committee, constantly learning from the program, feeling she grows just as much as the contestants.

Serving as the Fair Manager for the Dunn County Fair, Deb continuously sells the importance of her fair to the County to secure funding and resources to keep the fair running. She is one that cannot say "NO" when someone asks her to help with something fair related. She will often say that the fair is her blood. When asked to lead WAF's carnival night she, of course, said YES and has secured a bond with our Carnival Members making our Sunday night carnival event at convention bigger and better than it's ever been.

Deb, WAF is so grateful you didn't say NO when asked to serve. Congratulations to Deb Gotlibson!

## **FRIEND OF THE FAIR: DALE CHRISTIANS**

Our next Friend of the Fair is a gentleman who is an IAFE Heritage Award Winner, a two term District 1 Rep for WAF and Past President, during his time serving as fair manager for the Lincoln County Fair. Dale Christiansen, now the Fair Manager for the Central WI State Fair, missed being on the board so much, he is serving yet another term for WAF. Dale's fair knowledge is unique in that he can combine what he learned as a volunteer manager with his current position as a full-time manager.

When given the task to make his fair better, Dale reached out to community leaders to truly talk about the fair, it's importance, and how combined leaders can contribute to make the fair better. Changing fair dates, enhancing ticket sales for admission and grandstand shows, and updating the property are just a few small tasks he's undertaken. People are noticing the changes and the fair continues to grow.

Dale is always encouraging District 1 fairs to get more involved and his encouragement is working. Attendance at district meetings is growing and involvement in WAF committees and convention are also on the rise. Dale was instrumental in connecting the WAF Board with our Strategic Planner. Understanding that you can exchange some strategic planner knowledge for corn dogs is a pretty creative way to negotiate services. The connection he provided opened the door to the new ventures WAF has undertaken this past year. This connection has made a substantial difference in the future of WAF.

Thank you for all you have contributed to the Wisconsin Association of Fairs, Dale!

### **FRIEND OF THE FAIR: DEB GEGARE**

Our last recipient this evening is a person who has become a hub for our Fair Members, as they try to understand all of the rules they are statutorily obligated to follow. Deb Gegare Vine, Fairs Coordinator for the WI Department of Ag, Trade and Consumer Protection, is the person our fair members trust to get the answers they need. Debbie attends our spring and fall district meetings and our annual convention leading educational sessions. Often questions arise that might not be in Debbie's department, however, she can connect our fair members with other departments within DATCP, and create the connection. As fair managers come and go, Debbie is always educating the next fair leader.

Debbie's fair knowledge comes from a long line of involvement in the fair industry. Serving as a superintendent for the Rock County Fair, Debbie is also a very active fair judge. This background provides a wealth of knowledge. While visiting fairs the time she stays varies, based on the questions Wisconsin fair managers have, she never leaves until all questions are answered.

As the Fairs Coordinator she has made positive changes to the database to track Fair Judges and update the communication process of sharing fair data in SharePoint. Debbie is always looking for the next improvement.

Debbie, thanks for all you do for WI Fairs as the WI DATCP Fairs Coordinator. We'd be lost without you. The statement you say rings true, "Just remember, I'm Deb Gegare, and I Care about the Fair!"