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For Immediate Release—West Springfield, Mass.

October 19, 2026

4-H BEEF SALE AT THE BIG E BENEFITS YOUNG LIVESTOCK FARMERS FROM NEW ENGLAND AND BEYOND

On Monday, September 28, the 4-H Beef Sale at The Big E attracted prospective buyers to the Mallary Complex in West Springfield, Mass. Bidders were both new and returning, and included The Barn Yard, the Eastern States Exposition (ESE) Board of Trustees, North American Midway Entertainment (NAME), University of Massachusetts (UMass) Amherst Dining, Smith College Dining, Farm Credit East, Earthlight Solar, Green Development, LLC and more.

Judge Clete Vanderberg of Waco, Texas, worked with 4-H leader Paul Dunn on Sutton, Mass., to assess and rank 40 steers in this year's lineup. Steers sold at an average of $7.01/lb. The total steer income was $362,017. The 4-H Beef Grand Champion Overall and Heavyweight Champion steer was a crossbred steer named Titan raised by Jane Carroll of New York, and weighed an impressive 1,445 lbs. It was purchased for $24/lb. by brothers Chris and Everett Skinner of The Barnyard of Ellington, Conn., and their families.

"For our family, buying a steer at the 4-H Beef Sale is a way to recognize the young person behind the animal," said Chris Skinner. "Raising livestock takes months of early mornings, hard work, responsibility and care. When those young farmers step into the sale ring, we want them to know their effort matters and that their community is behind them. That is why we have continued to support the sale year after year. Business owners, restaurateurs and others have a special opportunity to make that support tangible.

"A strong sale helps young farmers see a future in agriculture and encourages them to keep learning and growing," he continued. "It also helps preserve the farming knowledge and local connections that benefit all of us. We are proud to play a part in that, and we hope others will join us in supporting these young people."

Beyond steer purchased, generously donated raffle baskets came from representatives from the six New England states. Proceeds from the basket raffle garnered $16,850 in funds for the 4-H Beef Program, a 64% increase from 2025.

The sale and its pool of buyers were bolstered by the generous support and volunteer efforts of ESE's Trustees, whose commitment to supporting young agricultural exhibitors continues to make a meaningful impact. For the second consecutive year, trustees from Rhode Island purchased all steers exhibited by Rhode Island participants, with the largest contribution coming from ESE Rhode Island Trustee Mark DePasquale, Founder and CEO of Green Development, LLC.

On behalf of the Eastern States Exposition (ESE) Board of Trustees, ESE President and CEO Gene Cassidy purchased the Overall Reserve Champion and Heavyweight Reserve Champion, raised by Zoey Violette of Massachusetts, for $12/lb. and the Overall Commended and Medium Weight Champion steer, raised by Molly Perkins of Connecticut, for $7.50/lb. Beef harvested from these two steer will be donated to local food insecurity shelters come November, when the prepared meat is delivered back to ESE.

On behalf of NAME, the No. 1 midway operator in North America, Midway directors Ed Dame and Gary Magyoran purchased a steer then generously donated the animal back to the program along with the payment they gave. NAME has been The Big E's carnival provider since NAME's inception in 2005, and a loyal bidder at the auction for many years. Opting to donate a steer back to the 4-H student allows the children to sell the steer again, both doubling their profit and supporting future education, beef projects and life after high school.

Garett DiStefano, director of residential and retail dining services at UMass Amherst, and his team purchased three steers which will be served within the dining halls at the university.

"UMass Dining is incredibly proud to continue our partnership with The Big E and support the annual 4-H Beef Sale," said DiStefano. "As the nation's leading collegiate dining program, we recognize the importance of supporting local agriculture and the next generation of farmers. What makes this event particularly meaningful is seeing the pride, dedication and hard work these young individuals put into raising and caring for their stock. Their commitment reflects the values we strive to promote: sustainability, responsible sourcing and supporting our local agricultural community."

DiStefano added that a recent conversation with a UMass student enlightened his own outlook.

"The student shared that growing up around animals gave him an appreciation for agriculture, but attending UMass has deepened his respect for local farming and the importance of supporting the next generation of farmers," he said. "We are honored to continue strengthening the connection between local farmers, young agricultural leaders and the UMass community. Supporting the 4-H Beef Sale is more than a purchase—it's an investment in the future and the young people that will lead it."

Additionally, four scholarships were awarded to hardworking 4-Hers prior to the commencement of the auction: Tyler Horn of Connecticut, Rachel Griffin of Connecticut, Zoey Violette of Massachusetts and Haley Sarandrea of Connecticut. ESE wishes each of them the best of luck in their future educational endeavors.

ESE is grateful to the many buyers that attended the 4-H Beef Sale and supported our rising agricultural workers. As an authority on agriculture, it is critical that ESE remains an uplifting space for these youths. By their generosity at the auction, NAME, The Barnyard and other bidders help advance the charitable mission of ESE.

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About The Big E

The Big E is the only multi-state fair in North America, celebrating the rich history, culture and traditions of the six New England states. As the principal event of Eastern States Exposition, The Big E presents the finest in agriculture, innovative, commercial, industrial and artistic developments, and the highest caliber of varied entertainment to the people of the United States for more than a century. The 17-day event has grown and become the largest event on the East Coast, recognized as the fourth largest fair in North America by its recent record annual attendance of 1.6 million fairgoers and counting. Head to TheBigE.com or follow us on social media to see what all the buzz is about.

Find a photo gallery from the evening HERE.