

GREAT BEND FARM & RANCH EXPO

April 9-11, 2014

A Fresh Approach, Building on Three Decades of Great Bend History

When Darren Dale first became acquainted with the spirit of Great Bend, his eyes got a bit misty. And, yes, they were tears of happiness.

"I went to that first meeting and saw 29 committee chairs; I got tears in my eyes," recalled Dale, president and chief executive officer of Star Enterprises TD LLC. "Seeing 29 people heading up the chain of command was extremely humbling."

Dale and his wife, Tana, are the backbone of the upcoming Great Bend Farm & Ranch Expo, which is scheduled for April 9-11 at the Expo Complex. But he is quick to note that the 300-plus volunteers, the Chamber of Commerce, the city of Great Bend and Barton County Fair Board make the show a success.

"The chamber is so strong – such a positive influence in the community," Dale said. "And the city built a brand new loading dock at the Expo, and another entrance and exit. The Fair Board always goes above and beyond the call of duty. Everyone sees me but I couldn't do it without this local support."

More than 700 inside and outside booths manned by exhibitors are expected this year on 80 acres; it is one of the largest farm shows in the United States. Show hours are 9 a.m. to 5 p.m. on April 9; 9 a.m. to 7 p.m. on April 10; and 9 a.m. to 4 p.m. on April 11. Staying open late until 7 p.m. on Thursday is a new venture this year to better accommodate the consumer population that works during the day. Corporate sponsors are KSN and American Hat Company Inc. Parking and admission are free.

When planning the Expo, Dale keeps one thing in the front of his mind – customer service. "We work for the vendors," he explained. "We want to give them a good show. When they are successful they will return year after year. The vendors' feedback is extremely positive. They like that it is easy to set up and tear down their exhibits."



www.GreatBendFarmAndRanchExpo.net

"We are not in the middle of a big city," Dale continued. "For example, when you go to larger cities, you have a semi that is 53-feet long and have to drive it through downtown. In Great Bend, you just go right up to the show grounds."

Vendors use the Expo not only for on-site transactions but also to make contacts. "A lot of them are meeting face-to-face for the first time with people they have been doing business with," Dale said. "Then later they can put a face with the name. It's all about the personal touch."

The Expo draws vendors from throughout the United States – from Washington in the north-west to Maryland in the east. Some also come from Canada and Australia. "These businesses can choose from so many trade shows. You have to make yourself stand out," Dale said, noting the reason for his special attractions.

For instance, Dr. Tom Noffsinger, DVM, will be a new addition this year with his low stress cattle-handling demonstrations at 2 p.m. Thursday, April 10. The goal is to encourage caregivers to understand more about cattle in order to apply handling concepts during calving, new cattle acclimation, processing, pen riding and sick-cattle management.

Other highlights include: horse-training demonstrations by Scott Daily of RFD TV each day in Expo III; Genex chute-side cattle service demonstration at 1 p.m. Friday, April 11; Loos Tales by storyteller Trent Loos at 12:45 p.m. Friday, April 11; sprayer demonstrations daily in Expo III; and KSN broadcasting live from the show all three days.

"These are the types of attractions that separate us from other trade shows," Dale said. "We are on the cutting edge of farming technology and livestock production."

Another reason the local show stands out among the rest is Show Chair Jan Westfall, Dale noted. "Jan is our Radar O'Reilly," Darren laughed. "She has the job done before you even ask her about it. She does a heckuva job; the show is a big part of her life."

In 1988, Westfall became involved in the previous show. She served on committees, co-chaired the event and was the first woman chair. This is her third year of working with the Dales.

"They work as a team," Westfall said. "Darren and Tana complement each other's talents. The farm show has grown since they have been involved because they revitalized it with all the new attractions. A lot has changed for the positive. I can see us going nowhere but up, Darren thinks outside the box."

Westfall also noted Dale has two other shows – in McCook, Neb., and Wichita Falls, Tx. Nevertheless, she said, he still takes time to visit Great Bend often, attending events such as the Chamber banquet and Barton Community College Foundation Auction.

In addition to the ag-related exhibits, the Expo also will feature food and drink vendors, a beer garden, golf-cart rental, and booths that feature jewelry, furniture, cooking items, outdoor supplies and other products. "It is focused on farming," Westfall commented. "But there is something for everyone to see."

Westfall also echoed Dale's comments about the hundreds of volunteers. "We not only appreciate them and their talents, we also are grateful to their employers for allowing them time off work," she said. "We also are thankful for companies that supply equipment and other items. If not for all these factors, we couldn't do the show." —

Reserve Your Exhibit Space!

Limited vendor space is still available for local companies! To reserve your booth, visit the website to print an exhibitor contract.

Volunteers Needed

If you are available to donate a few hours of your time to this valuable community event, please contact Jan Westfall at farmshow@greatbend.org.

Open Late Thursday!

NEW this year is the extended show hours on Thursday evening, where gates will remain open until 7 p.m. This gives consumers and small operations that work during the day to check out the show!

