



VOL. 31 | NO. 3 | December 2024

## ★ Kozelka's Korner ★

As we close the books on the 2024 Steele County Free Fair, I pause to reflect on some of the amazing adventures we explored in the past year. Our biggest adventure is the building of the NEW Steele Saloon - an adventure that is still in progress. Thank you to ALL of our GREAT donors that made this project happen. Without each and every one of you the dream wouldn't have come true. A BIG thank you to Doug & Cherie Meier for their leadership on this project and their continued support as progress is made on the completion of this building adventure.

Through a joint project with the Steele County Highway Department and the City of Owatonna Street Department, we took down the fence on the south end of the grandstand and put up a new fence further to the north. This adventure was done in preparation for the addition of a bike path along 18th Street beginning in the Spring of 2025. Currently, the SCFF Board of Directors and staff are exploring several different ideas for the use of this new area. If you have suggestions, please share them with us by phone - 507-451-5305, email: [steelecountyfreefair@scff.org](mailto:steelecountyfreefair@scff.org) or stop by the office. Our winter hours are 8:00 AM - 4:00 PM Monday - Thursday.

I am humbled to serve as the Manager of the Steele County Free Fair and am often the recipient of praise and appreciation for all our fair is. I am quick to share that THANKS belongs to ALL of our AWESOME sponsors and partner organizations. They are the reason we are able to be a FREE fair and the BEST Free Fair in the country. Please note the list of sponsors on the back page of this report. As you are able, support them with your business and THANK them for their continued support of the Steele County Free Fair.

An Adventure of this size, even with our amazing sponsors and partner organizations, is only possible with outstanding teamwork.

If you are reading this, you are part of the team. THANK YOU! The members of the Steele County Free Fair Board and Staff may be the faces you see during the fair. It is, however, the work of the Steele County Commissioners, Steele County Staff including 4-H and the Extension Service, Steele County Highway Department, Owatonna Park & Rec. Department, City of Owatonna Street Department, Owatonna Public Utilities, SCFF Grounds Crew, SCFF Open Class Superintendents, the Steele County Sheriff's Department, Steele County Sheriff Lon Thiele and his law enforcement colleagues along with the many other friends of the fair from Owatonna, Medford, Blooming Prairie, Ellendale, Hope and the Townships in Steele County that make this yearly adventure a successful and safe reality. It is risky to identify groups as there are so many who help make the Steele County Free Fair the popular August event and destination that it is. Again, if you are reading this, THANK YOU!

The New Year will soon be upon us and your Steele County Free Fair Board and Staff are already hard at work making plans for "Good Vibes in 2025". On behalf of the board and staff, thank you to our spouses, families and employers who allow us to do what we do for little more than the love of the fair. Their unwavering support does not go unnoticed. THANK YOU.

Please reach out to me with questions, concerns, compliments and new ideas for our fair. Your input is valuable and helps us to continually improve. On behalf of your Steele County Free Fair Board and Staff, I wish you a safe, healthy and enjoyable winter and I will "SEE YOU AT THE FAIR" August 12 - 17, 2025.

Happy Holidays,

Scott Kozelka

Steele County Free Fair Manager



# ★ Steele County Agricultural Society ★ Annual Meeting

The Annual Meeting of the Steele County Agricultural Society was held November 7, 2024, at the Steele County Community Center. Steele County Free Fair Manager Scott Kozelka presented his annual report and treasurer Tim Arlt presented the annual financial report.

The following incumbents were each elected to serve 3-year terms as a Director: Dan Deml, Mike Hamilton, Sandy Jirele, Doug Meier, and Roger Noble

At the November Steele County Free Fair Board Meeting, which followed the annual meeting, Dan Deml was re-elected as President, Wayne Steele as Vice-President, and Tim Arlt as Treasurer of the Board. Tracy Ignaszewski was appointed the Extension Service Member on the Board.

# ★ The Steele County Free Fair is being advertised with pride in Tanzania! ★

Rotarian and Superintendent of Owatonna Public Schools Jeff Elstad hosted a fellow Rotarian from Tanzania during the SCFF. The guest from Tanzania loved the fair so much that he wanted to bring some souvenirs back for his children. His children are pictured here wearing t-shirts from the fair. The Steele County Free Fair is being advertised with pride in Tanzania!



# ★ Steele County Free Fair is a Proud Community Partner ★



Robinson Carving Company, sponsored by Alexander Lumber, and the Steele County Free Fair auctioned off the woodcarvings created during the SCFF to benefit the Owatonna Foundation. The Steele County Free Fair is proud to give back to several non-profits in the Steele County community.



The Retrofit Companies, Steele County Free Fair, and the United Way of Steele County hosted a recycling event at the Steele County Free Fair grounds on September 7, 2024. The Retrofit Companies donated the proceeds to the United Way.

# ★ News, Notes and Fair Fun Facts From the 2024 Fair ★

- ★ 1193 visitors enjoyed the Muckle Museum during fair week.
- ★ 9440 people visited the Fine Arts display during fair week.
- ★ 14,500+ people visited the House Auto Group Auto Museum which featured Thunderbirds. The 2025 Auto Museum will feature Chrysler Autos.
- ★ 1029 exhibitors entered 3991 open class entries; 1804 of these entries were made online.
- ★ 1885 4-H projects, including animals, were exhibited at the fair.
- ★ The Courtesy Shuttles assisted fairgoers by providing 2077 rides.

## ★ Steele County Free Fair Evaluations Food Winners ★

### Most Popular Food At The Fair:

Soft Pretzel - Pretzel Wiz

### Best Refreshments:

Aquas Frescas -  
El Rey Del Taco "Crazy Pineapple"

### Most Unique Products:

Gridiron Outdoor Sauces

### Best New Food:

Bourbon Chicken Wrap/Bowl -  
Keeping It Fair Concessions

### Best Bargain:

Wraps - Torey's Restaurant

### Best Appearance Stand:

DeAnna's Donut Burger

### Spiciest Food:

"Kick Me in the Mouth Street Sauce" -  
Little Blue Elephant

### Rookie of the Year:

Halo Churro - Mami Churros & Creamery

### Most Customer Friendly:

Just Take the Cake Too

### Best International Food:

Mexican Street Corn -  
Blue House Corn Company

### Best Dessert:

Funnel Cakes - Pedersen's Funnel Cakes

### Best Service:

Godfather's Pizza

### Most Unique Food:

C.G.I. Burger - Come and Get It



## ★ Kids Pedal Pull Winners ★

- Age 4: Matthew - Medford, MN
- Age 5: Elle - Owatonna, MN
- Age 6: Rowen - Rochester, MN
- Age 7: Avin - Blooming Prairie, MN
- Age 8: Nohlen - Waterville, MN
- Age 9: Asa - New Richland, MN
- Age 10: Rayfe - Mazeppa, MN
- Age 11: Morgan - Owatonna, MN

87 youth participated in the pedal pull this year

## ★ SCFF Evaluations Rides Winners ★

- Best Lit: Musik Express
- Best Kid Ride: Wacky Worm
- Best Adult Ride: Zipper

## ★ SCFF Evaluations Games Winners ★

- Best Lit Game: Midway Jam
- Best Prizes: Midway Jam
- Best Kids Game: Shark Fest
- Best Adult Game: Machine Gun Alley

## ★ GoldStar Midway Top 10 Rides ★

1. Flying Bobs
2. Century Wheel
3. Musik Express
4. Re-Mix
5. Zipper
6. Vertigo
7. Wacky Worm
8. Insanity 360
9. Ring of Fire
10. Gravitron



## ★ More Details from 2024 ★

### ★ Bike Winners ★

8 bikes were given away as part of the Profinium, Inc. Saturday Ride Special during the fair. This year's winners were:

Brayden from Owatonna, MN  
Yarely from Owatonna, MN  
Addison from Faribault, MN  
Benjamin from Owatonna, MN  
Mary from Freeborn, MN  
Avin from Conger, MN  
Amanda from Alden, MN  
Mila from Spring Valley, MN



### ★ Church Service Collections ★

A total of **\$2025.39** was collected during the church services held in the Village of Yesteryear and in Fair Square Park on Sunday of the Fair. This donation was given to support Oak Hill Community Connections project.

### ★ SCFF Awards ★

#### ★ Open Class Photography

##### *Gladys Wavrin Award for Best Photo:*

"Brothers" by Danielle Nystrom, Owatonna, MN

##### *People's Choice Award:*

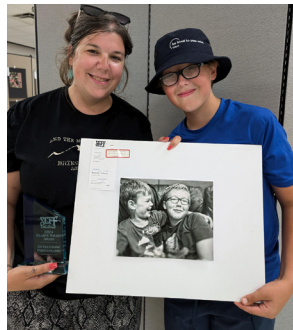
"Starry Night" by Cheryl Miller, Owatonna, MN

##### *Grand Prize Enlargements:*

"Church of St. Mary the Virgin" by Scott Cody, Owatonna, MN

##### *Grand Prize Snapshots:*

"Jack's Graduation" by Jennifer Anderson, Faribault, MN



#### ★ Culinary Arts Department Results

Culinary Creations: Adult: Mary Schenk, Owatonna, MN

Junior Ruler of the Kitchen: Maisy Sanford, Owatonna, MN

Adult Ruler of the Kitchen: Carla Brady, Medford, MN

Monica Kruschke Special Award: Linden Aarsvold, Owatonna, MN

##### *In memory of Karla Ihrke Special Award:*

Ronda Prechel, Faribault, MN

##### *Superintendent Award:*

Jackie Tibbetts, Owatonna, MN

#### ★ Fine Arts

People's Choice Award: Beth DeCoux, Owatonna, MN

#### ★ Youth Art

People's Choice Award: Everett Tardiff, Durham, NH  
& Lily Schroer, Claremont, MN

### ★ "Best of the Fair" Food Competition ★

#### Champion:

Chacapa-Noris Cuisine

#### Finalists:

Apple Fries-Minnesota's Brat Dog

Loaded Lattes-Just Take the Cake Too

MinneCookieDough Pie-Minneapple Pie

Hot Cheetos Potato Ball-La Borinqua





**A GREAT BIG "THANK YOU" TO OUR AWESOME PARTNERS WHO MADE THE 2024 STEELE COUNTY FREE FAIR AN AMAZING SUCCESS! WE COULD NOT DO THIS WITHOUT YOU, AND WE LOOK FORWARD TO WORKING WITH YOU AGAIN TO BRING "GOOD VIBES IN 2025"**

*- SCFF Board and Staff*

1st United Bank  
 ABS Global  
 Ag Partners  
 Al-Corn Clean Fuel  
 Alexander Lumber  
 Allina Health - Owatonna Hospital  
 AmVets Post 23  
 American Legion  
 Ameriprise Financial - Dean Velzke  
 Amy Swain Hearing Centers  
 Baker Tech Services  
 Baymont by Wyndham Owatonna  
 Benedictine Health Systems  
 Berkshire Hathaway Advantage Real Estate - Becky Hermanson-Hill and Darcy Ihrke  
 BetterLife  
 Big Top Rental  
 Bio Plastics Solutions  
 Birchwood Cottages  
 Blooming Prairie Vet Clinic  
 Bosch  
 Bremer Bank  
 Brick - Meger Funeral Home  
 Bridgewater  
 Brookdale Senior Living  
 Broskoff Structures  
 Bulldog Coatings  
 C-4 Complete Custom Cabinets and Carpentry  
 Camping World  
 Cargill  
 Carr's Tree Service  
 CarTime of Owatonna  
 Casey's General Store  
 Cashwise Foods  
 CashWise Liquor  
 Central Farm Service  
 Central Park Framing & Finds  
 Christian Bros. Cabinets  
 City of Owatonna  
 City of Owatonna Park and Recreation  
 City of Owatonna Street Department  
 CliftonLarsonAllenLLP  
 Clover Glen Farms  
 Cole's Electric  
 College City Beverage  
 Commerce Bank Geneva  
 Community Bank Owatonna  
 Compeer Financial  
 Costas Candies  
 Costco Wholesale 1376  
 County Inn & Suites  
 Courtyard by Marriott Owatonna  
 Crystal Valley Cooperative  
 Culver's  
 Dahlheimer Beverage  
 DAIKIN Applied  
 DeAnna's Pitas  
 Dean's Towing  
 Deerfield Ag Systems-Becks Hybrid Seed Dealer  
 Demi Heating and Air Conditioning  
 Depot Bar & Grill  
 Dwell Realty Group  
 Duke Rentals  
 Ecumen Brooks & Countryside Living  
 Edward Jones-Josh Cosens/Matt Edwards/Jeff Hall/John Havelka/Dan Mobley/Matt Stanislaw

Ellingson Companies  
 Ellingson Tree Service  
 Robert Everett  
 Express Pressure Washers, Inc.  
 Fame Awards  
 Fareway Meat and Grocery  
 Farmers Feed and Pet Supply  
 Fastenal  
 Federated Insurance Company  
 Fireplace Connection  
 Fleet Farm  
 FoamCraff Packaging, Inc.  
 Foremost Brewery  
 Four Seasons Electric  
 From the Ground Up  
 G & G Concessions  
 Gandy Company  
 GMI Insurance  
 Godfather's Pizza  
 Gold Star Amusements  
 Happy Tails Pet Store  
 Heartland Animal Hospital  
 Home Federal Savings Bank  
 Home 2 Suites by Hilton  
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 Hy-Vee Wine & Spirits  
 International Steel Erectors  
 Ron Janning-LG Seeds/AgroLiquid Fertilizer  
 Jensen Insurance Agency  
 Jensen Tree Moving  
 JJD Companies  
 JK Routh Contracting LLC  
 Kappy's Collision Center  
 Keck's Repair  
 Keen Bank  
 Kibble Equipment  
 Kid's Korner Educare Center  
 Kottke Jewelers  
 KOWZ/KRUE Country/KFAN  
 Legacy Signs  
 Let's Ride Boots and Apparel  
 Life Fitness/Hammer Strength  
 Life Style, Inc.  
 Little Sugar Designs  
 Loken Excavating and Drainage, Inc.  
 Lowe's  
 Ludewig Financial Group  
 Mages Insurance Group  
 Manke's Outdoor Equipment  
 Marathan Stables  
 Mayo Clinic Ambulance Service Mayo Clinic Health Systems-Owatonna  
 Metal Services of Blooming Prairie  
 MetroNet  
 Michaelson Funeral Home  
 Midwest Ag Advisors  
 Mike's Repair  
 Mineral Springs Brewery  
 Miner's Outdoor and Rec.  
 Minnesota Horse Breeders Assoc  
 Misgen's Auto Parts

MoeGeo's  
 Mohs Contracting  
 Mohs Homes  
 MSL Landscaping  
 NAPA Auto Parts  
 Casey and Amy Nelson  
 New York Life  
 North Risk Partners/TPS Insurance  
 Northern Beverage Distribution Co. LLC  
 Northland Farm Systems  
 Olmsted Medical Center  
 Olympic Fire Protection  
 Ormic Concessions  
 Owatonna Bus Co.  
 Owatonna Collision & Glass  
 Owatonna County Club  
 Owatonna Eagles  
 Owatonna Fire and Safety  
 Owatonna Fire Department  
 Owatonna Floor Covering  
 Owatonna Granite & Monument  
 Owatonna Heating & Cooling  
 Owatonna Motor Company  
 Owatonna People's Press  
 Owatonna Police Department  
 Owatonna Public Utilities  
 Owatonna RV Services  
 Owatonna Sports and Physical Therapy  
 Oz Concessions-Burke's Taffy  
 Piepho Roofing Inc.  
 PirkI Gas  
 Plaza Morena Campestre Grill  
 Premier Bank - Minnesota  
 Prime Garage Doors & More  
 Profinium Financial  
 R & K Electric  
 RE/MAX Venture  
 Representative John Petersburg  
 Ritchie Bros. Auctioneers  
 Riverland Community College  
 Sanco Equipment  
 Sanson Enterprises  
 Schroder Concessions  
 Senator John Jasinski  
 Seykora Asphalt Maintenance & Paving  
 Seykora Striping  
 Shorty Schraht Lawn Care  
 Sign Pro  
 Sleep City  
 Souba Greenhouse  
 Southern Mn Lawnworks

Spare Time Catering and Events  
 Spherion  
 State Farm  
 State Farm - Plemel Agency  
 Steele County Corn and Soybean Growers Assoc.  
 Steele County  
 Steele County American Dairy Association  
 Steele County Farm Bureau Federation Board  
 Steele County Highway Department  
 Steele County Sheriff's Department  
 Steele County Sheriff's Mounted Posse & Auxiliary  
 Steele County Special Deputies  
 Steele County Times  
 Steele - Waseca Cooperative Electric  
 Steve James Excavating  
 Syngenta  
 The Hubbell House  
 Thiele Trucking, LLC  
 Thompson Sanitation  
 Thrivent Financial-Nick Lewis  
 Timberdale Trace  
 Tom's Pro Glass  
 Tom Thumb Donuts  
 Tony's Flooring  
 Torey's Restaurant & Bar  
 Townsquare Media  
 Tralo Companies  
 Travel Leaders  
 Tri-M Graphics  
 Triple J Concessions-Fresh Fries  
 Turtle Creek Nursery & Landscaping  
 Union Home Mortgage  
 United Prairie Bank  
 United Way of Steele County  
 US Bank  
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 Viracon  
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 Wencil Construction Inc.  
 Welker Custom Homes, Inc.  
 Wencil Plumbing  
 Wenger Corporation  
 West Bank  
 West Lawn Farm  
 Wilbur-Ellis  
 Wireless World-Verizon  
 Wolff and Sons

Apologies to anyone we may have missed!

**See You At The Fair!**

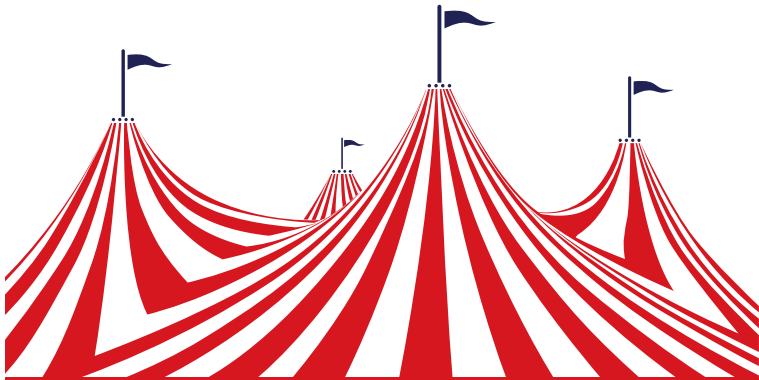






**Steele County Free Fair**  
 PO Box 650  
 Owatonna, MN 55060

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**Join Us This Year**  
**August 12-17, 2025**

★ **scff.org** ★

**Memorials and Donations**

**Donations Received:**

- Robert Everett
- Flower Department-  
Jack & Darlene Noble
- Hobbies-  
Deb Mather
- Equine Hall of Fame-  
Patrick McCarthy
- Rich Reseland

**Memorials Received:**

- In memory of Richard Fisher-  
Brother of Gene Fisher  
Grant & Denise Duffy
- In memory of Bob Abbe-  
Friend of the Fair  
Allen & Randee Radel
- In memory of Peter Grubish-  
Brother of Lisa Richmond  
Bruce & Rhonda Bennett  
Grant & Denise Duffy

