

2019 UMATILLA COUNTY FAIR PARADE

Umatilla County Fair Parade kicks off the festivities

Fair week's festivities begin with the Umatilla County Fair Kickoff Parade, which will usher in another year of fun at the Eastern Oregon Trade and Events Center in Hermiston while recognizing longtime fair contributor and former board member Dan Dorran and his wife, Terri.

Dan stepped down from his post on the board in 2017 after two decades of service to the county and said being named a grand marshal is "the highest honor the fair board can bestow on someone."

With serving board members restricted from being chosen as grand marshal, fair director Angie McNalley said this year was the right time for the Dorrans.

"We saw this as our chance to give a well-deserved former member the recognition," McNalley said. "They could have received any award 10 times over and it'd be deserved."

The group of parade grand marshals Dan and Terri join only magnifies the honor for them.

"I've always looked up to them. To be in the same, rare company as them really means a lot," Dan said. "I'm not sure we deserve it but we aren't giving it back. It's very, very humbling."

The distinction comes after a life-long commitment to the Umatilla County Fair. Dan's grandfather was

a fair manager in the 1950s and lived just a few blocks from the fairgrounds. Some of his earliest fair memories were helping clean out the animal stalls.

Now, he continues the cycle and has enlisted his children as volunteers around the fairgrounds each year while he and Terri still stay involved and give back to the fair.

"We still say it's our vacation," Dan said.

In his two decades as a member of the Umatilla County Fair Board, Dan assisted in just about every aspect of the fair. From livestock to food vendors to the budget and more, he did it all. To put as much time and effort as he has, he needed some help from home.

"It involves the whole family," he said.

From the 1950s to the present, Dan has seen the fair develop and grow into what it is today. With yearly attendance at 15,000-20,000 when he first joined the board, he said the fair now regularly exceeds 80,000 annual visitors.

He also spoke of an early goal of his and his fellow board members that was to raise the yearly livestock auction profits above \$75,000. Now, the auction's profits have surpassed \$500,000 each year.



While he's no longer officially guiding the fair into its future, Dan is still passionate about and dedicated to spreading the importance of not just the Umatilla County Fair, but all county fairs in Oregon.

"Even with social media and the changing times, county fairs are still a place for a county to come together and celebrate," he said.

Other honorees include 2018 male volunteer of the year, David Fesler of Milton-Freewater, and 2018 female volunteer of the year, Terrie Dennis.

McNalley said Fesler has been a yearly volunteer ever since his daughters were members of the fair court and last year was integral in running the water truck that suppressed dust around the fairgrounds. Dennis has spent a number of years volunteering in the livestock barns helping 4-H and FFA kids. Specifically, she's been a fixture in the sheep barn according to McNalley.

Both honorees are invited to participate in the parade, though they are not required to.

The fair board also presented Miguel Velasco of Hermiston's Velasco Used Cars with the 2018 Business Partnership Award. Velasco has helped grow the fair's Latino Night on Friday, which features a latino music festival that Velasco coordinates. McNalley said Latino Night has become the fair's best income night.

A special recognition award was also presented to Steve Wallace of Western Ag Improvement for his donation of time and resources to upkeep and development of the fairgrounds according to McNalley.

The kickoff parade is sponsored by Hermiston's Ranch and Home and will begin on Aug. 6 at 6:30 p.m. from Hermiston High School and will end at the Bi-Mart on South First Place.

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