

# **SPECIAL PROJECT AWARDS NOMINATION FORM**

**Name of Community or Multi-Community:** Bassett                      **Population:** 636

**Name of Project:** Sandhills Ranch Expo

**Project Contact Person:** Ann Dvorak

**Day Phone:** 402-925-8432

**Eve Phone:**

**E-mail:** advorak@esu17.org

**Category:** Economic Development

**Subcategory:** Tourism Promotion & Development

**Please identify which projects are also nominated for Special Project Awards:** Sandhills Ranch EXPO, Rock County Youth Leadership Class and History DVDs

**Date Project Started (mo./yr)** 1/10    **Date Completed (mo./yr.)** 6/10

**Is the project Annual/Ongoing?** Yes \_\_\_X\_\_\_ No \_\_\_\_\_

**Volunteer Hours** 2,000 +      **Number of Volunteers** 12 board members, 32 FFA members & hundreds of other community members

## **1) Please provide a brief description of the project.**

The mission statement of the Sandhills Ranch Expo clearly states our purpose: **The Sandhills Ranch Expo provides an affordable ranch - oriented trade show that exhibits state-of-the-art products and services to the Sandhills and surrounding areas that is free to the public, managed by people who give freely of their time and efforts so that unspent proceeds can be given to local community organizations.** The Sandhills Ranch Expo is the largest ranch oriented trade show in Nebraska. This trade show has been held at the Rock County Fair Grounds in Bassett for over 20 years. The Expo was formally known as the Nebraska Ranch Expo, but the previous operators of the Expo decided to take the show to Kearney. Several volunteers from the community decided that they wanted to keep this show in Bassett, so they set out to put on the first annual Sandhills Ranch Expo on June 15 & 16, 2010. The Expo gave businesses from Nebraska and surrounding states the opportunity to exhibit state of the art ranching equipment and the latest in home, fashion, and crafts. Vendors set up booths at the fairgrounds and at the high school, and visitors were able to view everything free of charge. This year, the Expo featured Double S Extreme Bull Riding and Free-Style Bull Fighting as the Wednesday night entertainment followed by a concert by rising country star, Susie Dobbs. During the day on Wednesday and Thursday, a saddle horse pulling contest, roping clinic, and chute demo were also held. The most important thing about this event, though, is that 100% of unspent proceeds will be given back to local community organizations.

## **2) Identify the planning and implementation of the project.**

The Sandhills Ranch Expo was planned out and executed by a board made up of twelve volunteers from the community. This board gave direction to the Expo: developed entertainment, solicited vendors, advertised the event, and managed the finances. The board met on a monthly basis until April when it began meeting every one to two weeks. Each board member was in charge of specific duties such as the craft show, finances, entertainment, advertising, volunteers, etc. The community of

Bassett has goals to improve youth involvement in the community and to capitalize on tourism. The first goal was met by involving the Rock County FFA Chapter in the execution of the Expo. One young man in the chapter was asked to design and operate a website for the Expo. He also developed a Facebook page for the Expo where he was able to pass along information to the 150 fans of the site. Other members chipped in to pick up trash, clean the fairgrounds, and setup and take down vendors and entertainment. Several youth commented that they had no idea it took so much work to put on the Expo, but they felt a sense of accomplishment in working together with adults to carry out such a huge task. The second goal was also fulfilled when the community was able to put on an event that attracted thousands of visitors to the community. Local hotels, restaurants, and businesses were utilized, and visitors were able to take in the historical societies display of buildings and artifacts at the fairgrounds. As stated earlier, the Expo has been a part of this community for over 20 years. It provides not only an opportunity for the community to work together but also brings thousands of people into the community. Bassett businesses rely on the income from visitors to the community and residents look forward to the chance for entertainment and celebration. The thought of having this event move to another community was a shot at the vitality of Bassett, so this project was identified as a priority.

### **3) Describe volunteer involvement in planning and implementing the project.**

Volunteerism began with the Sandhills Ranch Expo Board of Directors. Each member of the board volunteered their time and talents to making the event a success. Responsibilities were delegated to board members based on their talents and past experiences. This twelve member team worked to get everything planned and organized. Once the week of the Expo approached, though, hundreds of community members chipped in to help clean up and dry out the fairgrounds, set up tents, and unload and load vendors. It is difficult to determine exact numbers and hours of volunteers as there were so many that contributed in one way or another. The board members individually recruited these volunteers, many of which were relatives and neighbors. The Rock County FFA Chapter members also volunteered the help of their 32 members for the week.

### **4) Identify Project Outcomes.**

In the Fall of 2009, when the former Expo coordinators decided to move the show to Kearney, Bassett community members decided that they wanted to keep the Expo in Bassett. Their concern was the loss of an event that attracts thousands of visitors from all over Nebraska and surrounding states to our small community. The Expo is an opportunity to showcase Bassett and all it has to offer and this was recognized and exploited by the outpouring of support that the community provided. Several local businesses chose to become vendors at the Expo, while others donated equipment, time, and money to the event: the Sandhills State Bank donated money to support the Susie Dobbs concert, while the local MacDon implement dealer donated money to support the Extreme Bull riding event; the local electrician donated his time to set up electrical outlets for booths while the local plumber donated his time to help pump water out of the fairgrounds; Behlen Country donated panels for the livestock vendors while Bassett Feeding donated cattle for the chute demonstration. The community was in complete support of this endeavor as they saw it as an opportunity for Bassett to shine. When it was all said and done, over 200 vendors had showcased their products to an estimated crowd of over 2,000 visitors. Over 1,100 people attended the Wednesday night entertainment, which was a standing room only event. The Sandhills Ranch Expo brought in enough money to sustain the event for years to come while donating money back to the community to help improve the fairgrounds and to the scholarship fund of the FFA Chapter. Plans have already been set in place for the 2011 Expo, and several vendors have already secured their booths.

**5) Describe how resources were identified and used to successfully implement the project.**

The Expo had some money in reserve from previous years' shows. Some money was donated by local businesses to be spent to help fund entertainment. Most of the money used to operate, though, was raised through selling booth space to vendors. Indoor lots sold for \$250 while outdoor lots sold for \$350. Vendors were asked to pre-pay so that the board had money to pay for materials and supplies such as postage, advertising, entertainment, tents, and booth dressing. Money was also made from the sale of tickets to the Wednesday night entertainment. Local businesses and community members donated the majority of materials such as tractors, forklifts, skidsters, and other equipment. Labor was mostly volunteer outside of the tent and skirting company.

**6) Future Plans**

The community is already planning to host the 2011 Sandhills Ranch Expo. The Expo Board has already met to discuss improvements for next year. Now that a safety reserve of money has been built up, the Expo board plans to donate money to the Rock County Fair Board so that they can improve the condition of certain areas of the fairgrounds. Money is also being set aside to gain interest in hopes of one day putting up more buildings to help house the Expo. The board would also like to build upon this year's event by hosting some bigger names in entertainment in hopes of attracting even more visitors to our community. When this project began, it seemed colossal, but by pulling together and everyone chipping in, the event was a success. The community has learned that by working together, we are alive and well. We are not a dying town. We have a lot of potential. In realizing this, future development efforts should not seem like an impossibility.

**7) Please describe what aspects (if any) of the project were especially unique or creative?**

The most unique aspect of this project was the volunteerism and involvement from so many community members. Bassett was on the brink of losing this event to the larger community of Kearney, but everyone stepped up to protect Bassett's future and the future of the Ranch Expo. Now, things are in place to make this event successful for many years to come. It was fantastic to watch young and old work together to make the Sandhills Ranch Expo a victory. Everyone walked away from the project with a huge sense of accomplishment.

# Rock County residents show support for keeping a farm show in Bassett

News spreads quickly and this it did recently, following an announcement that the Ranch Expo would be moving from Bassett in 2010. Interested parties immediately set up a local public meeting. This came together for the night of Sept. 24 at the Legion club.

Joe Andrews, Charlie Magnusen and Lisa Murdock informed those attending that plans were being formulated for the old Expo board to reunite and have a farm show next June at the Rock County Fairgrounds, the week of the annual high school alumni. Andrews told that members of this committee are Gene Cosgrove, Kent Smith, Roy Stewart, Jay Stewart and the three mentioned above. Three additional members are needed to fill out the 10 member board.

The Ag Society's regular meeting is scheduled for Oct. 7, 7 p.m., with the Expo meeting to follow at 8 p.m. The meetings are open to the public. Letters to exhibitors will be

mailed in the coming weeks with more information on the June, 2010 event in Bassett.

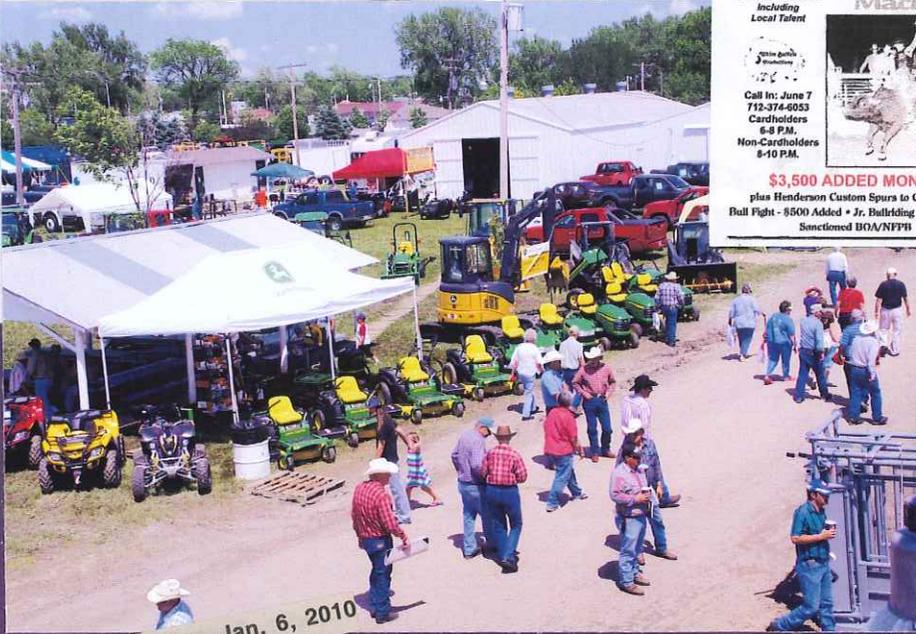
During the past 20 years of the Expo existence over \$100,000 has been spent in improvements at the fairgrounds according to Andrews. He also stated there are some funds for a show in 2010. George Murdock pledged \$1,000 from Northern Plains to help with postage for this first year.

Lisa Murdock told of the amount

of work involved in putting on a show of this magnitude, mentioning a problem with drainage south of the grandstand, and the need for young people to get involved.

Tony Fox volunteered his help during the meeting and several did the same following.

A hand of appreciation was given at the end of the evening, showing support for the plans to keep a ranch show at the Rock County Fairgrounds for the future.



Rock County Leader, Bassett, Neb., Wednesday, Jan. 6, 2010

## Expo plans have begun

It has started!!!! Plans are fully underway for the 2010 Sandhills Ranch Expo to be held June 16 and 17 in Bassett. For more information contact 402-684-2320, P.O. Box 687, sandhillsranchexpo.com.





# June 16 & 17

Rock County Fairgrounds & Rock County High School

## BASSETT, NEBRASKA

www.sandhillsranchexpo.com  
402-684-2320

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### Wednesday Night Entertainment

**TWO SHOWS • ONE TICKET • \$10**  
\* & UNDER FREE WHEN ACCOMPANIED BY ADULT

**7:00 P.M.**  
Including Local Talent

Call In: June 7  
712-374-6053  
Cardholders  
6-8 P.M.  
Non-Cardholders  
8-10 P.M.

**\$3,500 ADDED MONEY**  
plus Henderson Custom Spurs to Champion  
Bull Fight - \$500 Added • Jr. Bullfighting - \$100 Added  
Sanctioned BOA/NFHA

**DOUBLE S EXTREME BULL RIDING & FREE-STYLE BULL FIGHTING**

Sponsored By: **MacDon**



**SUSIE DOBBS**  
9:00 P.M.

Sponsored By: **SANDHILLS**  
Formerly Commercial Bank, of Bassett, NE



**TICKETS AVAILABLE FOR BOTH SHOWS AT:**  
Sandhills Ranch Expo Office (Lower Hardware),  
Sandhills State Bank,  
Tri County Bank, KBRB, KBRX  
or by mail, PO 678, Bassett, NE 68714

**ADDITIONAL SHOW SPONSORS:**  
Commercial National Bank  
Purina Mills - Farmers Ranchers Coop & Long Pine Foods  
Behlen Country - John Kearney  
Bassett Feeding - Sandhill Equipment  
Niobrara Valley Equipment

Sandhills Ranch Expo would like to thank Bill Sanger for personally providing us with the stamped envelopes for our mailings. It is because of the generosity of people like Bill that we can continue to promote our community.

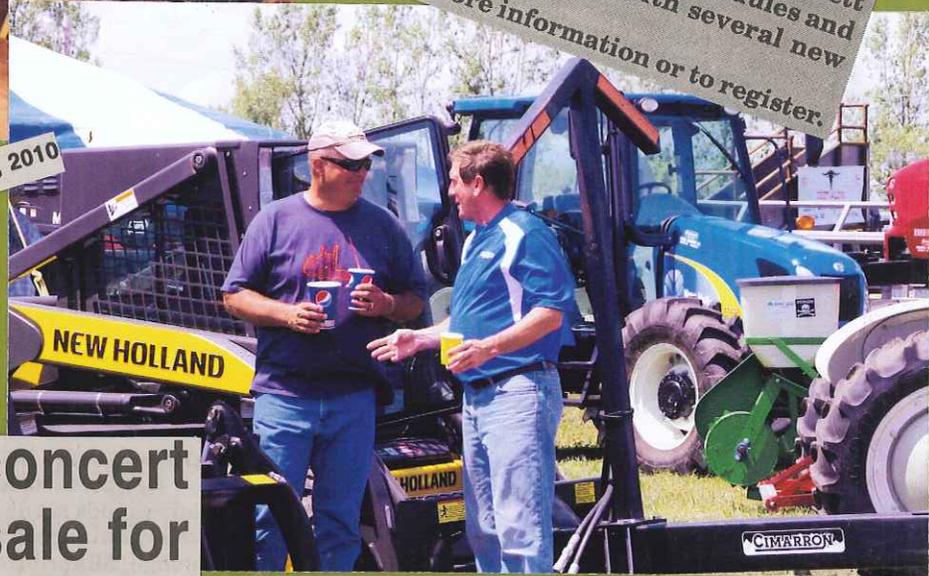
The Expo Board 14c (41)



# Sandhills Ranch Expo booths starting to fill

The Sandhills Ranch Expo committee is booking booths for the upcoming show, June 16 and 17, in Bassett at the fairgrounds and high school. Event schedules and entertainment will soon be finalized with several new features planned. Phone 402-684-2320 for more information or to register.

Rock County Leader, Bassett, Neb., Wednesday, June 30, 2010



## Bull riding and live concert tickets are now on sale for the Sandhills Ranch Expo

The Sandhills Ranch Expo, being held in Bassett June 16 and 17, now has tickets on sale for the Wednesday night entertainment starting at 7 p.m.

Since 1997 the Double S Extreme Bull Riding Tour has been entertaining audiences across the Midwest. Each year the tour gets bigger and better with the show formula: take the best from the previous tour and add new ideas. This formula has made the Extreme Bull Riding Tour a "gold buckle tour" adding yearly to the stock pile of award buckles. The 2007 tour marked a decade of bull riding on the Extreme Trail. With the growing popularity of bull riding, the number of cowboys competing has increased and with increased numbers comes a greater level of competition. The athleticism of the free-style bull fighters and local talent on the backs of bulls, the evening will prove to be a crowd pleaser. This show is being sponsored by MacDon.

The evening will be completed with a live concert by Nebraska native and rising country star, Susie Dobbs, at 9 p.m., sponsored by Sandhills State Bank. One very important thing to know

about Dobbs is she doesn't take being told "no you can't" lightly. At first glance it would be easy to assume that the blonde haired, blue-eyed beauty is just the typical "girl-next-door" but anything could be farther from the truth. In her short, yet storied life she has been a ski resort photographer, disc jockey, gymnastics studio owner, radiation therapist, booking agent, horse breeder and last but not least, one of country music's fastest rising stars. With a nationwide touring schedule including the prestigious National Finals Rodeo in Las Vegas, a sponsorship with Double H Boots, and a feature spot in Wrangler's national ad campaign, Susie Dobbs is making those who told her "no you can't" regret that those words were ever uttered.

The \$10 tickets for children age six on up to adult may be purchased by mail, P.O. Box 678, or at area businesses: KBRB in Ainsworth, KBRX at O'Neill, all locations of the Tri-County Bank, Sandhills State Bank in Bassett or the Sandhills Ranch Expo office in Bassett (located at Leon's Hardware). Children under five will be admitted free when accompanied by an adult.

### Informal Meeting To Be Held

There will be an informal meeting, Sept. 24, 7:30 at the Bassett American Legion to discuss the interest in a trade show in Bassett.

