

2026 WATERTOWN WINTER FARM SHOW DEDICATED TO Steve Keppen



The 81st Annual Watertown Winter Farm Show is proud to honor Steve Keppen—a man whose life was rooted in hard work, family, faith, and a deep love for agriculture.

Steve was born in Chester, South Dakota, and grew up in the Orland area as one of ten children. His wife, Myrna, was born in Flandreau and raised in the Rutland and Colman communities, one of five children. Both were “farm kids,” shaped early by chores before sunrise, responsibilities that couldn’t be ignored, and parents who believed in choosing the “hard” path—the one that built character, endurance, and an unwavering work ethic. For that foundation, they have always been grateful.

The Keppen’s story began at General Beadle State College (now Dakota State University) in Madison, where they attended before marrying in 1969. After graduation, the couple moved to Volga for teaching positions in the Sioux Valley School District. Steve’s passion for education carried him through 42 years of teaching and mentoring, spanning Sioux Valley, Dakota State, and Brookings High School. Steve retired in 2013, leaving behind countless students whose lives he touched. Myrna taught at Sioux Valley for seven years before beginning a 36½-year career at 3M in Brookings, retiring in 2016.

But no matter where life led them, their roots always pulled them back to agriculture. By 1987, the couple knew they wanted their sons—Greg and BJ—to grow up with the same values they had been given. That year, the Keppen family purchased an acreage on the west side of Volga and made the decision to enter the cattle business. Steve, ever the careful researcher and “over thinker,” spent countless hours studying breeds and asking advice from seasoned cattlemen. The couple finally settled on Charolais—a choice that proved to be exactly right.

Steve & Myrna credit the Arnold Wient family for guiding them in those early days. “As our herd grew, so did our boys’ interest in showing cattle. What began in 4-H expanded to larger shows, and the Watertown Winter Farm Show quickly became a favorite,” said Myrna. “From the early 1990s onward, we were met with kindness, support, and a show that was—and still is—one of the best-run in the region. The friendships, the customers, the high-selling bulls, and even a Supreme Champion Bull remain among our most treasured memories.”

Even after retirement, Steve never slowed down. His dedication to improving their herd’s genetics was unwavering. Anyone who has raised cattle knows the patience, time, and hope it requires—and Steve poured his heart into it. Amid the

work, the couple cherished watching their grandchildren grow and cheering them on in their activities.

When Steve passed away in 2023, the family’s loss felt immeasurable. “Continuing Keppen Charolais on my own would have been impossible without the help, strength, and dedication of our family,” stated Myrna. “To Greg, Janell, and Mattisyn; to BJ, Katie, Braxton, and Halle; and to my granddaughter and her husband—Keah and Nick Hardin—and their children, Ava and Camden: thank you. I love you to the moon and back. Your support has kept Steve’s vision alive.”

With everyone working together, they are committed to carrying forward what Steve and Myrna began in 1987. “We hope he would be proud—of the herd, of the family, and of the legacy he leaves behind,” said Myrna.

Today, we honor Steven Keppen, a devoted husband, father, grandfather, educator, cattlemen, and friend. His impact lives on in the people he taught, the family he loved, and the herd he built with patience and purpose.

This dedication is both a tribute and a promise—to continue the work he started and to keep his spirit alive in the fields, the barns, and the shows he treasured.