

2024 WATERTOWN WINTER FARM SHOW DEDICATED TO Vedvei and Jensen Families



By Twila Schmitt, Contributing Writer

Alan Vedvei and Scott Jensen know a thing or two about the Charolais breed. The Lake Preston area farmers/ranchers have served as Charolais breed managers at the Watertown Winter Farm Show for decades – and this year will be honored, along with their families, during the 2024 dedication ceremonies.

The 79th Watertown Winter Farm Show is scheduled for February 7-10, 2024, at the Codington County Extension Complex.

The Watertown Area Chamber of Commerce Ag Committee, which organizes the Watertown Winter Farm Show, annually recognizes families or individuals who have spent years contributing to its success by dedicating the Farm Show to their name. In 2024, two families and two individuals will share this honor – the families of Scott and Kim Jensen and Alan and Deb Vedvei, along with Merlin Bunde and Lynn E. Johnson.

“My first memory of the Watertown Winter Farm Show was helping my father show sheep,” said Vedvei. “He was showing a Hampshire ewe that had lambed and my sister and I got to carry the lambs. This was in the mid-1960s.” Vedvei and his wife, Deb, have owned Vedvei Charolais Ranch since 1986.

Jensen’s first memory of the Watertown Winter Farm Show was attending the Angus show as a high school FFA student. He and his wife, Kim, have owned Jensen Charolais Ranch since 1998.

In addition to overseeing the Charolais Show and Sale, the Vedvei and Jensen families have been consigning cattle to the Farm Show for many years. They have seen their kids show at the event and now are getting the chance to see their grandkids show as well.

Both families have an intricate connection to Wienk Charolais, as Deb and Kim are the daughters of Arnold and Carol Wienk who

helped both young couples get started in the Charolais breed. The Jensens partnered with Wienk Charolais from 1980-98.

“After working with Deb’s father (Arnold Wienk) for nearly 10 years, we started Vedvei Charolais Ranch in 1986 and have had our own farm and ranch ever since,” said Vedvei.

While they’ve watched their own businesses and families grow over the years, Vedvei and Jensen have also seen growth in the Watertown Winter Farm Show.

“It is ‘The’ Farm Show for Northeast South Dakota. The place where those farmers and ranchers go to get the latest genetics in the beef industry or find the latest technologies for grain producers,” said Vedvei.

“The number of commercial booths at the Farm Show has increased. And while beef numbers may have decreased some, the quality seems to get better every year,” he said. “The sales continue to get stronger and they have added the Supreme Row. There are also many educational programs related to production ag.”

Jensen, who has served on the Livestock Committee since 1983, noted the many improvements to the Codington County Extension facility – including electrical, lighting, public address system, WiFi and improvements to the show ring.

“In 1998, we saw the first year to have one catalog for all the shows and sales,” said Jensen. “The internet bidding also has changed the way the cattle are sold at the Farm Show.”

Tim Sheehan, President and CEO of the Watertown Area Chamber of Commerce, said the focus on honoring farm families this year is very fitting. “These families from the Lake Preston area have dedicated heart and soul to the Farm Show, and it’s now time for us to recognize and thank them.”

Scott and Kim Jensen have been married for

43 years. They have two married daughters: Danielle (Josh) Mikkelson and their daughters, Maliya and Havana and Dannica (Barry) Callies and their sons, Kase and Nash.

“We enjoy spending time with family and following the grandkids in school and 4-H activities. We love to travel and spend time at the lake when we can,” said Jensen.

Alan and Deb Vedvei also treasure family time – and enjoy spending time with three daughters and their families: Corrie (Brandon) Walter and daughters Hadlee, Bentlee and Cambree; Stacie (Mitch) Olson and daughter Paisley and son Camden; and Melanie (Jerod) Olson and daughters Khloe and Kinzlee and sons Kash and Kolt.

“We take great pride in our family and try to support them in their activities. All three of our daughters remain active in the cattle business, although each have off-farm employment,” said Vedvei.

The Vedvei’s free time is spent at the lake during the summer and attending grandchildren’s sporting events and various livestock shows throughout the year.

“We enjoy traveling, but find it hard to get away with our livestock. I enjoy going to livestock shows and don’t think I’ve missed a Watertown Winter Farm Show or South Dakota State Fair in well over 50 years,” said Vedvei.

In addition to recognizing the Watertown Winter Farm Show’s successful past, Jensen sees a bright future for the event, including the livestock shows and sales.

“Agriculture is the foundation of the South Dakota economy. The Watertown Winter Farm Show continues to showcase and promote the newest agricultural technology in one place. It’s where people come together,” he said.

Congratulations Alan & Deb Vedvei and Scott & Kim Jensen!