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# IAFE CONVENTION NEWS



December 1-4 • Henry B. Gonzalez Convention Center • San Antonio, Texas

## Five Honored with Heritage Awards

SAN ANTONIO, TX — December 2, 2019 — Today at the International Association of Fairs and Expositions (IAFE) 129th Annual Convention, Heritage Awards sponsored by Haas & Wilkerson Insurance were presented to five exceptional individuals in the field of fair management, according to IAFE President and CEO Marla Calico. The convention is taking place Dec. 1-4 at the Henry B. Gonzalez Convention Center in San Antonio, Texas.

Carol Porter of Haas & Wilkerson Insurance announced and presented the awards to the recipients, who were nominated by their fairs' staffs and/or board members. The awards recognize the achievements of outstanding fair volunteers. Each winner received a plaque and \$1,000, and each fair nominating the winners received \$500. The nominees were required to have at least 10 years of fair management experience, could receive no more than \$2,500 remuneration annually for serving in the position, and were required to be current members of IAFE.

The 2019 IAFE Heritage Award winners are Brian Carlson of the Itasca County Fair in Grand Rapids, Minn.; David Simington of the Clay County Fair in Spencer, Iowa; Susan Sullivan of the Montgomery County Agricultural Fair in Gaithersburg, Md.; C.W. Thomas of the Iowa State Fair in Des Moines; and Charlotte Thompson of the Washburn County Fair in Spooner, Wis.

**Carlson's** involvement with the fair began when he was nine years old and participating in 4-H activities. Following college, he returned to serve as an Itasca County Fair director for 10 years. He was reelected to the board in 2015 and currently serves as vice president. He has served as the fair's funding director since 1977 and frequently serves as a media contact and representative of the fair at local meetings of the Rotary, Optimists, and Kiwanis clubs. Carlson wrote a book on the fair titled *Itasca County: Its fair, agricultural association, and agriculture*.

In addition to his service to the Itasca County Fair, Carlson has served both the Minnesota Federation of County Fairs (MFCF) and the North Dakota Association of Fairs (NDAF). He currently serves as the MFCF District 8 Director and served as the NDAF President-Elect in 2009 and President in 2010. And after nearly 60 years in the fair industry, Carlson is still learning by currently being enrolled in the IAFE Institute of Fair Management.

Carlson serves his community outside of the fair as well. He served as Grand Rapids Township Supervisor from 1998 to 2010. He has chaired his local chapter of Volunteers for the Handicapped Association for more than 30 years.

**Simington** has served as a volunteer member of the Clay County Fair Association Board of Directors for more than 30 years, including service on the Executive Committee since 1991. He served as board president from 2005 to 2017, making him the longest serving president in the fair's 102-year history. A farmer by trade, Simington has served as open class and 4-H/FFA sheep superintendent and as liaison between superintendents and board. Simington has represented the fair at each Iowa Association of Fairs conference since 1991 and each IAFE Annual Convention since 1994.

"Under Simington's quiet leadership, the fair has focused on honesty, integrity, and respect, which are core values of the fair," stated Clay County Fair CEO/Manager Jeremy Parsons.

In addition to his service at the fair, Simington supports other organizations in the Spencer community. He served the Spencer School Board of Education for 17 years, including eight years as president. He has served the "Brothers in Blue" Prison Ministries for 14 years and as congregation president of the Faith Lutheran Church for four years.

**Sullivan** has served as a volunteer at the Montgomery County Agricultural Fair for more than 40 years. She began as a 4-H member showing and selling livestock at the fair. She helped paint barns, served meals to other volunteers, and worked with adults to organize departments before the event and served in the fair office during high school. She served as fair secretary from 2000 to 2002, vice president in 2003, and as president in 2004. Sullivan has assumed the role as volunteer coordinator, where she directs hundreds of volunteers annually to keep the fair running. Each summer, she trains more than 100 volunteers to work the fair's Information Booths, which help fairgoers in countless ways including helping lost children, directing families around the grounds, and answering questions about exhibits and attractions. Sullivan has attained Life and Honorary Member status at the Montgomery County Agricultural Fair for her more than 1,000 hours of service to the fair.

Her commitment to volunteerism is in lock step with her desire for the fair to be an inclusive organization. Sullivan has worked with the leadership of the Chinese American Parents Association to expand the fair's volunteer corps with adults, young adults, and children who have little to no idea beforehand about the fair's cultural impact in the community.

“Those who know her will say there are few volunteers they have met who have provided consistent and knowledgeable leadership to advance the growth and improvement of the fair industry as she has done,” stated Montgomery County Agricultural Fair Executive Director Martin Svrcek.

**Thomas** has served in the fair industry for more than 30 years. He has served on numerous Iowa State Fair committees including Concessions, Foundation, Admissions/Parking, Audit, Capital Improvements, and Competitions, where he has served as chair for more than 10 years. He served as vice president of the board in 2002-2003 and president of the board in 2004-2005. Thomas has also served on the Guthrie County Fair Board for many years, including serving as president from 2002 to 2015. He served the Association of Iowa Fairs for 12 years, including as the association’s president in 1998-1999. He has been a regular participant at the Association of Iowa Fairs conference and the IAFE Annual Convention and has sat on educational panels on a variety of topics from disease control to school start dates.

Other community organizations Thomas is involved in include serving as past president of the Guthrie County Cattleman’s Association and past Master of the Blue Lodge. He has been a member of the Za-Ga-Zig Shrine organization since 1973, and is president and captain of the 580 Shrine Clue, a Honda group that travels to parades and community celebrations and functions.

**Thompson** has served as a fair volunteer and 4-H leader over the last 65 years. She served as the fair’s vice president from 1983 to 1993 and as the fair’s president from 1993 to 1997. Since 1991, Thompson has proudly volunteered as superintendent of the open class/schoolhouse. She is meticulous in displaying each exhibitor’s talents properly and maintaining and upgrading the exhibits to make the viewing experience the best it can be. Over the years, Thompson has donated her own money and supplies to keep the schoolhouse running.

As a 4-H leader, she has provided leadership and support for the clothing and food projects, holding member meetings, teaching workshops, and organizing events such as food reviews and clothing reviews. Thompson introduced the Washburn County Fair Talent Contest, and for the past 13 years has chaired, advertised, and organized the event. Her Wheelbarrow Decorating Contest has been a hit with fairgoers and helped beautify the grounds.

In addition to her dedicated work at the fair, Thompson has engaged the community in other ways. The Washburn County Association of Home and Community Education (HCE) has been a passion of hers for many years. She has served as the HCE treasurer since 2010. She served as president of the Hilldale Homemakers from 1986 to 1994 and was treasurer of the Tri-County Dairy Promoters from 1980 to 1994.

“County fairs are in my blood and with dedication, hard work, commitment, and lots of fun, I believe we can keep them going,” stated Thompson.

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## ABOUT IAFE

The International Association of Fairs and Expositions (IAFE), based in Springfield, Mo., is a voluntary, nonprofit corporation, serving state, provincial, regional, and county agricultural fairs, shows, exhibitions, and expositions. Its associate members include state and provincial associations of fairs, non-agricultural expositions and festivals, associations, corporations, and individuals engaged in providing products and services to its members, all of whom are interested in the improvement of fairs, shows, expositions, and allied fields.

Contact: Rebekah Lee: [rebekahl@fairsandexpos.com](mailto:rebekahl@fairsandexpos.com) or 800-516-0313



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**International Association of Fairs and Expositions**

3043 East Cairo St , Springfield, MO, 65802, USA

**Phone** (417) 862-5771 or **Toll free** (800) 516-0313

**Web** [www.fairsandexpos.com](http://www.fairsandexpos.com) **Email** [news@fairsandexpos.com](mailto:news@fairsandexpos.com)