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OMAN'S CONTRIBUTION BRINGS IMPROVEMENTS TO THE IOWA STATE FAIRGROUNDS

Des Moines, IA - Thanks to a generous contribution from Jill and Mark Oman, of West Des Moines, the Iowa State Fair Blue Ribbon Foundation will continue its mission of preserving and improving the Iowa State Fairgrounds. The Oman's \$1 million gift will help renovate and restore the historic Fairgrounds that Iowans across the state enjoy.

Growing up in Knoxville and Cedar Falls, Jill and Mark were not raised to be Fairgoers, but began making lasting family Fair memories as their children grew. As philanthropists, the Omans wanted to make a difference in the lives of people across Iowa, but found this difficult. The pair realized their favorite thing about the Iowa State Fair is how it brings the entire state together. "We couldn't find another way to give to the whole state, and the Youth Inn particularly helps kids from all over Iowa who work so hard with their different projects," said Jill.

For their gracious contribution, the Oman Family Youth Inn will be dedicated at opening ceremonies on August 11th at 9:00 am. The Youth Inn is a dormitory for young exhibitors, located on the east hill of the Fairgrounds, and includes bunk beds, showers, kitchen facilities, and a stage area. The project took three years and three phases to complete, starting in 2014 with a new roof, and air conditioning on the upper level. The second phase included an updated fire alarm and suppression system, as well as new elevators that made all levels of the building handicap accessible. The final phase, completed for the 2016 Fair, includes a freshened exterior, renovated windows, landscaped parking, and a new kitchen among many other improvements to the nearly 75 year old building first built as a Works Progress Administration project.

"The Oman's generosity will benefit young exhibitors and Fairgoers for generations to come," said Peter Cownie, Executive Director of the Iowa State Fair Blue Ribbon Foundation. "We are very grateful for Mark and Jill's commitment to improving this wonderful facility, and to the Iowa State Fair."

The Blue Ribbon Foundation is a non-profit 501(c)3 organization. Since its inception in 1993, the Foundation has generated more than \$120 million for the renovation and preservation of the historic Iowa State Fairgrounds.

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