

# AG Expo 2006

**A**s the number of farms across the state diminishes, attracting visitors to the annual Ag Expo on the campus of Michigan State University can be a challenge. After a few years of adjusting times and re-evaluating exhibits and demonstrations, this year's event, held July 18-20, drew higher attendance than it has in the past two years.

New this year was the absence of off-site field demonstrations. To increase foot traffic for vendors and MSU exhibits, Ag Expo organizers decided to try holding small demonstrations on the actual Ag Expo grounds.

"The on-site demonstrations were very popular, especially the animal identification exhibit, the utility vehicle 'ride and drive' and the zero-turn mower 'ride and drive,'" says Kirk Heinze, Director of ANR Communications and Ag Expo.

Making Ag Expo a pull for entire families also helped to increase attendance; with several MSU exhibits geared toward younger visitors this year. Organizers were also looking to attract non-farming families to Ag Expo as a way to teach them about farming.

"The challenge is to promote family educational opportunities along with the traditional trade show messages," Heinze says. "We don't want an either/or situation here; rather, we are striving for a both/and - both agricultural producers and families looking for education and fun. The thinking is that the latter will learn more about our agricultural industry in the process."

The official kick off to Ag Expo was the annual VIP breakfast held on July 18, where EPA Administrator Stephen L. Johnson was the keynote speaker.

"We've learned that when acting alone, mandating rules and regulations, our progress is incremental. But when we work in cooperation with our partners, including our partners in the agricultural community, we can actually accelerate the pace of environmental protection and build upon the environmental gains we've already achieved," he said.

Collaboration with the agriculture community is so important that Johnson signed off on a National Agricultural Strategy in May.

"I want EPA to be part of a constructive, problem-solving strategy to produce environmental and economic solutions," Johnson noted. "By working together we can develop solutions that are both economically reasonable and preserve our environment."

The annual Michigan FFA Foundation Auction following the breakfast raised nearly \$2,000 to support agricultural education and leadership programs. First on the auction block was a complete set of Michigan FFA toy tractor models from 1993 through 2005, as well as a prototype of the 2006 Michigan FFA model tractor, a John Deere 7420. Ray Mazurek of Brighton, had the winning bid and purchased the set for \$1,500. Former state FFA advisor Rich Karelse and Charlie Arensmeier, former FFA state executive secretary, donated the set of tractors in their original boxes. The prototype John Deere 7420 tractor is the last in the John Deere series and will be available in Tractor Supply Company stores this fall.

A chance to be the first raffle ticket to be entered in a drawing to win a restored 1948 Ford 8-N tractor



*MMPA member and Michigan Representative Judy Emmons (R-Sheridan) spoke with MMPA President Elwood Kirkpatrick, center, and MMPA General Manager John Dilland during the annual Ag Expo Breakfast that officially kicked off the 2006 Ag Expo at MSU.*

was next, bringing in a winning bid of \$250 by Dave Morris of Grand Ledge. Raffle tickets for the restored tractor were sold through Ag Expo for \$5 each.

“We had a great Ag Expo with nearly \$3,000 in ticket sales for the restored 1948 Ford 8N raffle tractor,” says Megan Hirschman, Michigan FFA Foundation Annual Fund Director. “This has been a very successful program for us in the past and we will be selling more tickets for a chance to win this great tractor at other events throughout the year.”

The winning raffle ticket will be drawn March 8, 2007, at the FFA State Convention. Tickets are still available and can be purchased at New Holland equipment dealers around the state, from FFA members at various county fairs and FFA events, or by calling the Michigan FFA Foundation at (517) 323-6569.

A freshly painted “Daisy,” MMPA’s larger than life fiberglass cow, greeted visitors outside the MMPA tent. Displays featuring the impact the dairy industry has on the Michigan economy and the many services MMPA provides “Working to Make a Difference — for Generations,” decorated the tent, while MMPA Member Representatives and other MMPA staff members were on hand to chat and answer questions.

The 2007 Ag Expo will take place July 17-19 in East Lansing.



*Ag Expo is always a good place to pick up small equipment. MMPA member Duane Milligan’s son thought his dad’s new Caf-Cart made a good place to catch a ride to the parking lot from his older cousin.*



*Kids got to learn by doing in the CANR tent. Here, they are learning the effects of runoff during a storm.*



*MMPA Dairy Communicators Leona Daniels, left, and Julie Schwab demonstrated delicious dairy recipes in the CANR tent for UDIM.*



*Many equipment dealers were on hand to display various types of implements, like this round bale wrapper.*