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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE: March 6, 2025

Northern WI State Fair announcing the retirement of Rusty Volk, Executive Director

For Immediate Release

The Northern Wisconsin State Fair Association, Inc. announces the retirement of their Executive Director, Rusty Volk, CFE, IFMG, effective January 1, 2026. Rusty has served the Fair Association for the past 17 years and has been instrumental in leading the redevelopment of the Northern Wisconsin State Fairgrounds. With Rusty's leadership, the Fair Association has updated infrastructure and facilities, increasing events and attractions, for the economic viability of the surrounding communities. The annual Northern Wisconsin State Fair is the largest family-oriented event in Northern Wisconsin, with an attendance exceeding 100,000.

Jim Koehler, Fair Association president stated, "Rusty's vision and enthusiasm is celebrated yearly at one of the most anticipated events of the year, the Northern Wisconsin State Fair. This family-friendly event captures rural America and displays our agricultural roots and traditions. Sprinkle in carnival rides and entertainment that does not take a back seat to anything in the area. The Northern Wisconsin State Fairgrounds have been improved year after year with a newer grandstand with stadium seating, new restrooms, updated electrical, newly asphalted roads, and the recently completed agricultural campus with a community safe room building. It is hard to see Rusty retire, but I wish to congratulate him on all his accomplishments over the last 17 years. The Northern Wisconsin State Fair Association Executive Board will be busy over the next several months, hoping to find a successor that will continue to carry on with the success Rusty has enjoyed"

Debbie Baier, NWSF Staff added, "On behalf of the staff at the Northern Wisconsin State Fairgrounds, we extend a very sincere thank you and congratulations to our Executive Director, Rusty Volk, as he announces his retirement. We and the entire community will miss his passion for the fair and vibrant personality. The legacy he leaves behind, a brand-new Agricultural Campus to name just one, speaks for itself. He is leaving the NWSF in a better position than when he arrived, but also in a good position moving forward with his replacement's new vision and strategy. Rusty, we will remember your energetic "Good Morning" each day with a smile and gratitude. Thank you for your invaluable mentorship, leadership and friendship."

Rusty's involvement in the International Association of Fair and Expositions (IAFE) graduating from the Institute of Fair Management and receiving his Certified Fair Executive designation from industry peers is a testament to Rusty's commitment and support of the greater Fair Industry. Serving the Wisconsin Association of Fairs (WAF) as a board member and on numerous committees, Rusty has worked and supported Fairs across Wisconsin by mentoring, speaking, conducting workshops and leading legislation to benefit the Fair industry. Rusty's motto, "Don't Look Back, you're not going that way" is an attitude for all to appreciate.

Jayme Buttke, Executive Director for Wisconsin Association of Fairs commented, "Rusty is such a valuable asset to the Fair Industry. A go-getter, a visionary and a leader; all things that he showcased as he grew the Northern WI State Fair. I often found myself calling him to bounce off an idea, which usually resulted in an even bigger idea. His willingness to share his knowledge with others was extremely generous. The Wisconsin Association of Fairs benefitted greatly from his service on the Board, Committees, as part of our Strategic Planning Team and as a legislative advocate. I loved that I could always give Rusty a task or job, and I never worried about it again. He always did what he said he was going to do, and in a way I would do it, or better. Thank you for sharing all your knowledge, passion and visions with us Rusty. You've left an impression on the fair industry, and we are forever grateful!"

"It has been an absolute pleasure to serve the Northern Wisconsin State Fair Association, Chippewa Falls community, IAFE, WAF, and all the service organizations in Chippewa Falls who utilize the Fairgrounds to attain their missions. Rusty shared that he "looks forward to continued service in our community, mentoring the Fair Industry, volunteering, and enjoying time with my wife and family." (Rusty Volk, CFE, IFMG)

The Fair Association Executive Committee is seeking passionate, energetic applicants for the Executive Director position, creating Fun for Everyone.

About Northern Wisconsin State Fairgrounds: The Northern Wisconsin State Fairgrounds is a premier event venue located in Chippewa Falls, WI. Known for hosting a variety of community events, the fairgrounds provide a welcoming space for entertainment, education, and celebration.