CHAPTER VIII

Activities and Events

In 1910 the N.W. School and Experiment Station began organizing adult educational service, including agricultural meetings for the men, homemaking meetings for the women, general lectures, and the Farm Crops Show. A brief review of the premium book and the schedule of events for the recent Winter Shows will find a three-figure total of events and activities. A set of eight bound volumes containing the complete set of premium books and program schedules for the 75 years is maintained in the archives vault of the Northwest Experiment Station. In general, this chapter will review the historical benchmarks of the major events or sections of what we know today as the Red River Valley Winter Shows.

THE CROPS SHOW

Outside of adult educational meetings, the Farm Crops Show is the oldest event at the Red River Valley Winter Shows. The idea was first planned and named by Otto I. Bergh, who was then the agronomist teaching in the Northwest School of Agriculture and researching at the Northwest Agricultural Experiment Station. Professor Bergh suggested that the quality of small grain, corn, and forage was unusual in the Red River Basin and that fact was largely unknown except among some of the local people. He suggested that samples of the crops be brought in for the Farm Crops Show. Further, he recommended that to attract show samples from farmers, extraordinary effort be made to provide substantial premiums for winners in the crops competition.

The Kiehle building on the N.W. School campus was new, with an up-to-date auditorium seating 500, and equipped with a stage, lights, and the latest 35mm movie projection equipment. It included a gymnasium with space for the first Farm Crops Show. What an exciting setting for adult education to be launched for the pioneer farm families! Except by word of mouth, many people hadn't heard much about this new Experiment Station or School of Agriculture. No extensive mailing list had been developed yet in the office. To establish a mailing list, Conrad Selvig wrote to each of the postmasters up and down the Red River Valley requesting from each the names of 25 farmers being served by the post office. Many names were received and information on the annual Short Course and Farm Crops Show was mailed. Communications were sent to selected business and industries for premiums to be awarded winners. The best ten ears of corn were awarded a 14" x 30" Playford cement silo worth $330. The best single ear of corn was awarded 20 rods of fencing for first place and a Cyclone seeder for second place. The sweepstakes award for wheat received a Jack Jr. gasoline engine worth $75. The winning oats sweepstakes competitor received a Bluebell cream separator. While this level of interest and support by industry was great at the outset, it soon became too much of a financial burden for the business community to provide these costly premium awards year after year.

Again, people of the Red River Basin rose to the occasion and suggested that crops were important to everyone and maybe all should share in the expenses involved in staging an annual Crops Show and providing premiums, more modest of course, for winners in the competition. To assume the responsibility for such an idea, the Red River Valley Development Association was born in 1914. Each county board of commissioners appropriated a modest sum to be used by the Minnesota Red River Valley Development Association, which organized itself into a non-profit promotional and educational corporation under Minnesota statutes. The Crops Show became a major Winter Shows project of the Red River Valley Development Association beginning in 1914 and has continued so to the present, with other groups joining in the project. The expenditure of some $3500 paid out for premiums annually is currently underwritten by the 14-county Red River Valley Development Association. The total available for premiums is augmented today by support from seed processors. The Crops Show and the beautiful panorama of the RRV landscape are the first sights to catch the eye as today's visitor enters the south arena. The Agricultural Extension Service has a booth located strategically in the middle of the Crops Show traffic as visitors examine the attractive arrangement of Crops Show samples. The county extension directors, area agents, and scientists for the Experiment Station are on hand throughout the week to answer questions from visitors.

Today, the Crops Show is planned and arranged by a committee representing various crop commodity organizations and individuals in the Red River Basin. The committee meets annually sometime after the show closes to evaluate and begin the next year's planning. The Crops Show committee includes the Extension Service, the Minnesota Crop Im-
The level of premiums paid to winners in the Open, Youth, and Certified Seed Shows are rather modest. A real challenge for the committee in the years ahead will be to raise these premium rates to a more appropriate level. Probably other sectors’ contribution to the Crops Show itself needs to be reviewed and strengthened to maintain usefulness for the modern crop production picture. For instance, how can the potato and sugarbeet commodity groups tell an appropriate crop production picture. For instance, how can the potato and sugarbeet industry, and individual citizens. This personal sacrifice and family-orientation activities, for show competition arrangements, for youth activities, and for the Honored Dairymen program.

This dairymen’s confederation is probably more active than ever today at the Winter Shows and expends a major amount of their modest appropriation for Winter Shows dairy promotional activities. The strong leadership of Dr. Ed Frederick, dairy scientist at the Northwest Experiment Station in the fifties strengthened dairy activities at the show. Dr. George Marx today continues to provide the frontline leadership spark that coordinates the activities of the dairy planning committee: dairymen, extension personnel, and officers of the Red River Valley Dairymen’s Association. The leadership of dairy farmers also is stronger today than ever in the planning work for Winter Shows activity.

THE LIVESTOCK SHOW

Livestock species, including beef cattle, swine, sheep, and horses, were uppermost in the minds of the professional agriculturalists and the farm leadership as the Winter Shows was being born. During the 1915 Farm Crops Show, a Red River Valley Livestock Breeders Association was formed. Essentially it was a federation representative of the several county livestock breeder groups which had recently been formed by a few breeders in each county. The first officers of the new Red River Valley Livestock Association were Tom Canfield (county agent from Lake Park, president), Mike Jeffers (Red Lake Falls, vice president), and C.G. Selvig

THE DAIRY SHOW

The Dairy Show, held in a garage in downtown Crookston, began modestly in 1917, the year of the first Livestock Show. A few head of Guernseys, Holsteins, and milking Shorthorns were exhibited in spite of difficult transportation service. The midwinter roads weren’t very practical for the few small farm trucks that were beginning to appear on the scene. Most of the livestock from any distance at all had to be brought into town by sleigh or train to Crookston on the train and led down the street to the show. Moving cattle out of warm barns into a cold transportation and preparing them for a Dairy Show put a lot of stress on the animals and on their owners. Despite that, the numbers at the Dairy Show grew as fast as space became available. The livestock farmers loved their animals, and they not only worked hard to put on a great show but they were especially loyal to the idea of the Red River Valley Winter Shows. Things were much better after the livestock buildings were built in downtown Crookston. The size of the show was generally controlled by the amount of room available in the barns, by the weather conditions, and road conditions.

The personal sacrifice and family-based contribution made by dairymen is well described in the case of James and Darlene Muzzy in the late 1950’s. Jim and Darlene were coming up the ladder of dairy husbandry and community leadership, working hard with their young family and their dairy farm operation. They took time to show at the Winter Shows. They were among the first to give substantial personal support to the new building fund established to buy land and build a new facility just outside the city of Crookston. They contributed breeding stock, the income from which was deposited with the board of managers. This family has continued showing purebred cattle. The Dalford Farms are still among the leaders and winners at the Dairy Show today. Of course, there have been many contributions by breeders of beef cattle, swine, sheep, and horses, but space just doesn’t permit more than one such story to explain the spirit of Valley farm folks.

A dairy sale was attempted early in the history of the Winter Shows, just after World War 1. The results were so poor that the sales committee of the Red River Valley Dairymen’s Association decided against trying such an idea again in the middle of winter. More recently, however, in 1983 and 1984, there have been two dairy sales with a sharp increase in quality and quantity especially for the sale of 1984 and with enough success to encourage more such sales of top-quality cattle.

The Red River Valley Dairymen’s Association included more dairy processors than farmers in the early years. They secured a modest appropriation from the state legislature as early as 1916 to promote the dairy industry in northwestern Minnesota and immediately began to spend some of those funds at the midwinter Dairy Show. This custom has continued throughout the 75-year history. Currently, the Dairymen’s Association, along with the dairy scientists from the Agricultural Experiment Station and the Extension Service out in the counties, provide the sustaining leadership for educational activities, for show competition arrangements, for youth activities, and for the Honored Dairymen program.
(superintendent of the Experiment Station, secretary). Fifty-eight breeders from the ten counties became members. Directors of the new association were Al Jensen (Clearbrook), C.L. Spalding (Warren, MN), E.C. Schroeder (Moorhead), K.O. Kolstad (Fosston), F.A. Green (Stephen), J.A. Houske (Halstad).

A livestock judging contest and demonstration was held in a garage in downtown Crookston in 1916. Planning then went forward during 1916 for the first Livestock Show, which was held in downtown Crookston in 1917 at the Sathre Garage. Eighty-seven head of livestock including, a few dairy cattle, were brought to Crookston and prepared for show. These competed for $300 of premium money raised by the Crookston business community. Despite the temporary stalls, undependable roads, and weather, the reservations for the next year's Livestock Show in 1918 required renting an additional garage and an old livery barn.

The first Livestock Show in the new buildings downtown was held in February of 1919 after the brick livestock pavilion was built in 1918 on Broadway. Interest in livestock was growing. The Association incorporated and secured a $2,000 state appropriation to be used for promotional expenses of the show in northwestern Minnesota. The state aid for such development activity remained at $2,000 for a few years and was raised in the mid-20's to $5700 annually. In 1930, the economic downturn resulted in a cut to $4700. Currently, the modest appropriation of $6300 is spent entirely for premium payments to livestock exhibitors who are successful show winners at the annual Livestock Show.

The breeders cooperated early with the county agents, the school of agriculture teachers, and the vo-ag teachers, by providing animals for livestock judging contests. Competition in the show was restricted to Minnesota breeders until 1962. Then the show was opened to anyone from anywhere. Not one year of show competition has been missed since 1917, although 1935 came very close to breaking this record. But everybody pitched in, fixed the roof section damaged by fire, and the show proceeded as scheduled. The purebred sales idea was picked up by the re-organized Livestock Association, encouraged by Experiment Station scientists, railroad agricultural development agents, and county agents.

Typical is the 1948 catalog which advertises a two-day sales of registered sheep, swine and cattle consigned by Minnesota and North Dakota breeders. One hundred eighty-three head of registered livestock were described in the catalog, including bred gilts, ewes, Holstein and beef cattle, and milking shorthorn cattle. A.J. Dexter, agricultural development agent for the Northern Pacific Railway Company, was the sales manager selected by the sales committee from the Livestock Association. Mr. Dexter provided leadership for developing a system for the purebred sales. A committee of livestock breeders from the Livestock Association was appointed each year to make the plans for the sale; a sales manager was hired to handle the management details, and a banker acted as clerk. The total sales were deposited and after sales expenses were paid, the committee remitted to all who sold purebred livestock on the sale. In recent years, sheep and swine offered on the purebred sales are just under 30 for each species and from 80 to 90 head of beef cattle. Bill Strickler, former president of the Red River Valley Livestock Association, provided the following up-to-date figures on livestock numbers at the show: Beef cattle: 1981 - 402; 1982 - 346; 1983 - 342; 1984 - 322.


In the late 1940's, a group of agricultural leaders, including A.J. Dexter, agricultural development agent for the NP railway; Glen Johnson, district 4-H leader; J.E. Roningen, East Polk County Agent; and George Nornes, vo-ag instructor, began to talk about a Junior Livestock Futurity Show. The idea was to provide an opportunity for boys and girls to raise purebred livestock and show at the Winter Shows. The idea behind the Futurity Show was outlined by J.E. Roningen, East Polk County Agent, McIntosh, as follows.

The Junior Livestock Futurity of the Red River Valley Winter Shows, Crookston, was set up by the Red River Valley Livestock Association in 1948 as a Junior Heifer Futurity Show. The Swine and Sheep Futurity began with the 1950 show.

Objectives of the Futurity Show:

1. To encourage boys and girls to build purebred herds and flocks by starting with outstanding purebred females.

2. To teach young men and women, efficient livestock production and proper livestock management through actual practice.

3. To get the full cooperation of the breeders of purebred livestock to furnish top animals of good foundation stock to qualified boys and girls at reasonable prices and to give helpful information on caring for and showing of livestock at the Winter Shows.

4. To solicit the full cooperation of the county extension agents, agricultural instructors, and 4-H club leaders not only to give instructions to Futurity members on the care of livestock, but also to encourage the members to attend the shows.
and showing of calves, pigs, and sheep, but also to create in the Futurity members a desire to build up purebred herds and flocks in the Red River Valley.

Pete May, a county agent in the Valley, was the superintendent in 1950. Oscar Nelson, county agent from Mahnomen, provided leadership for 1951 and 1952. Harley Shurson, county agent for East Polk County, was the chairman of the Futurity Committee and superintendent of the Futurity Show from the early 1950’s until he retired recently. The total number of purebred animals in the Futurity Show number anywhere from 140 to 200, depending upon the year. The original idea of the committee envisioned that youngsters who had never handled livestock might get started in the business. As the idea finally evolved over several years, however, the Futurity Show became a strong force in persuading parents who were livestock breeders to urge their children to become part of the livestock business. Children grew their own animals as part of the family business, entered their livestock in the Futurity Show, as well as helped Mom and Dad show other stock in the Open Show. Harley Shurson, long-time superintendent of the show, can point to a number of livestock breeders today who were launched in the business with the useful early experiences and encouragement of the Futurity Show. The Futurity Show is another example of people doing something themselves, providing an event or an experience which strengthens industry, in this case livestock industry.

**THE WINTER HORSE SHOW**

The showing of horses at the Winter Shows goes back to 1917 when draft horses were first shown. This practice continued sporadically into the early 1930’s when the gasoline tractor replaced horses on the farm scene and the draft horse competition was dropped. In the early 1960’s, however, a 4-H Pony Show was held in the old livestock pavilion in downtown Crookston. The place was filled to the rafters. An era at the Winter Shows was reborn. This time the showing wasn’t draft horses. The attraction was recreational horses, a recognition of a fast-growing interest by farmers and non-farmers.

Gleanings from the history of the Red River Valley Winter Horse Shows follow, with the help of Gene Miller of the Northwest Agricultural Experiment Station and Herb Mauritson, member of the board of managers, both representatives of the Red River Valley Horse Breeders Association. The first full weekend Horse Show was staged beginning Friday, February 28, 1964. A beginning had been made in the two previous years with the farm service concession booths in place. While it was a beginning, neither the light horse breeders nor the farm service concessioners were happy. A mounted saddle group from Fargo-Moorhead assisted the Crookston Horse Show enthusiasts in these first one-day events in 1962 and 1963.

A long narrow corridor of rough lumber had been erected between the new Winter Shows arena and the livestock pole barn to the west. In order to get a running start for the pole and barrel events, the horsemen would race through the corridor under the roof, which barely cleared their western hats. One horse and rider combination slipped on the concrete threshold coming in the west door and took a bad spill into the arena.

The first three-day Winter Horse Show planning was long on enthusiasm and short on experience. No one knew how long it would take to clear the entire arena of commercial exhibits and prepare for the Horse Show. Horsemen arriving early pitched in and helped the concessioners dismantle their booths and carry out exhibit and display materials. Horse Show people came from many parts of two states. Again the pioneering spirit, ready to tackle a project with many unknowns, came through.

Show officials for this first major show included Gene Miller, Crookston, show manager; Dietrich Reimer, superintendent; Mrs. Henry Rogers, secretary of the Appaloosa division; Ben J. Layton, secretary of Quarterhorse division; Helen Leikness, secretary, Open Show; and Dora Brown, secretary, Arabian division. The horse breeds at the first Show included the American Quarterhorse, Appaloosa, and Arabian in the registered classes.

Saddle club queens participated in the show. Elaine Reitmeier was the queen, representing the Agassiz Club, Juanita Bonesack (Miss Garrison Dam queen), Shannon Rees (North Dakota Appaloosa queen), Fay Thompson (North Dakota Arabian Association queen), Kathy Thomas (North Dakota State University rodeo queen), and Kathy Thoen (Minnesota High School Rodeo queen). Beginning then and continuing to the present, rodeo queens from saddle clubs and other organizations have staged the famous "Queen Ride" to open each session of the Winter Horse Show program.

It was obvious from this first big show that the local Crookston horse enthusiasts couldn’t be expected to manage this growing event. Gene Miller called a group of horsemen together, including Dietrich Reimer, animal scientist at the Northwest Experiment Station; Ben Layton, Hawley; Dora Brown, Kelso, ND; Bill Morrow, Dilworth; Arnold Miller,
The Moorhead; and Don Hart, Fargo, in the final hours of the 1964 Horse Show. The meeting laid the groundwork for the Red River Valley Horsebreeders Association. The association later expanded, with representation from all major horse breeds in the two states of North Dakota and Minnesota represented at the show. Accordingly, the number of directors for the Red River Valley Horse-breeders Association increased in number, with a specific breed responsibility being assigned such directors in each of the two states.

Horse Show managers were elected by the Horsebreeders Association each year. Through the years the managers included Everett Solheim, Charles Malarkey, Mrs. Barb Schafer, Gand Forks, North Dakota; and Marilyn Hagen, East Grand Forks. Many volunteers were recruited by the association each year. Without the volunteers the Winter Horse Show would not have been.

The 1964 Horse Show event has grown from a half-day event in the very early 1960’s with few horses to a major Winter Horse Show event drawing exhibitors from several states. An approved breed show is usually accomplished.

The Agassiz Riders, Inc., a saddle club based in the Crookston area, leased the Winter Shows facility for a fall Horse Show in 1964. The management and conduct of that show have continued under their leadership through the years. A number of the people involved in the winter Horse Show have also been involved in the Agassiz Riders Saddle Club.

We Salute The RED RIVER VALLEY WINTER SHOWS ON THEIR 75th Anniversary CROOKSTON FARMERS CO-OP ELEVATOR 1220 SOUTH MAIN PHONE 281-2881 CROOKSTON, MN


SPECIAL EVENTS

Many regularly slated activities and some new events at the Winter Shows were organized and reorganized in the early 1960’s under the leadership of George Nornes, Climax, Minnesota, and called “Special Events.” These tended to appeal to different interests, cultures, needs, or beliefs of groups in the Valley. The special events that have been annual affairs for many years include the talent festival, now 25 years old, the Future Farmer of America Children’s Barnyard showing of young farm animals, free pony rides for the children, and Donkey Basketball which fills the Strickler Arena with teams from Gentilly, Euclid, Crookston and Climax competing.

The Hall of Fame honors individuals who have given long-time outstanding service to the Red River Valley Winter Shows. More detail is included in Chapter 10. Forty-five individuals have been so recognized and are listed in the appendix.

The King Agassiz Coronation Banquet is a gala event celebrating the crowning of a new King Agassiz after a week of selection interviews and events with the sixteen County Kings, official judges, and the King Agassiz committee.

The Dog Show is a recent addition to a very special interest group.

A Miniature Tractor Pull was featured on Saturday evening in the arena for a number of years.

The 4-H Arts In Entertainment performances have captured the hearts of Winter Show visitors the past two years.

The radio program, Yesterday, Today, and Tomorrow, with host Cecil Malme, was well received at the shows during the day in just the past year.

A special opening ceremony has been developed in the shows building, with a color guard, show officials, and
legislators participating with the singing of the United States and Canadian National Anthems.

Professional entertainment programs have been scheduled from time to time, featuring such performers as Joe Feeney of the Lawrence Welk Show, the Emeralds from Nashville, Tennessee, and Luther Bjerke, the wild Norwegian from Grand Forks.

A recent special event is organized and sponsored by the bankers of the Red River Valley, who provide funding to find a nationally recognized expert to speak to the agricultural industry in the Valley. The first speaker was Orion Samuelson of WGN TV in Chicago, whose filming of the Winter Shows was seen on over 100 TV stations across the country and who addressed nearly 2,000 people in the Technical College gymnasium.

High school bands were featured each day for a number of years until their school programs became too crowded for participation at the Winter Shows.

A draft horse pull was added to the program in 1983 under the able leadership of Dr. Gary McVey of the Technical College. This event plays to a full house every year.

A western rodeo was a special event for two years under the encouragement of Vern Hagen of East Grand Forks.

A major TV network in cooperation with KXJB TV taped a program "What's on Your Mind" with Winter Shows visitors in 1984.

A concessioners' bean feed and/or coffee reception has been sponsored by city officials and Winter Shows Board to say thank you to exhibitors.

The government day luncheon with show officials, national and state legislators, city, county and community elected government bodies, and major agricultural producers and farm organizations is an unusual opportunity for meaningful fellowship and dialogue. The agribusiness committee of the Crookston Chamber of Commerce cooperates with the board of managers to stage this event.

More than one Secretary of Agriculture from Washington, D.C. have visited. Vice presidents of the United States have been special guests. The annual visit by officials from the North Dakota Winter Shows at Valley City facilitates an exchange of ideas.

The foregoing list isn’t inclusive of all events but gives a picture of the variety of interests served at the Winter Shows today.

WOMEN'S DIVISION

The official program for the first annual Short Course planned for farm families at the Northwest School and Experiment Station in 1910 has as much space given to the women’s educational program as that for the men. The importance of the crucial family partnership in farming was recognized in those pioneering efforts in rural education for adults. This has continued throughout the history of the Red River Valley Winter Shows.

The early programming was almost entirely planned by the home economics faculty of the Northwest School of Agriculture. In time, leaders from various farm clubs and federated women’s groups were active for a few years in the planning process. Later, as home economics agents became part of the county extension service, these well-trained educators volunteered to provide stability and updated expertise to the women’s planning committee.

Today, the women’s division remains strong. It is representative of rural women and has probably one of the best-organized regional committees to plan, integrate, and conduct the feminine section of the show each year. The ladies’ planning committee has a representative on the board of managers. For more detail see Chapter 6.

POULTRY AND PET SHOW

Details of the development of the show have been provided by Harold Thomforde, Crookston and are included in Chapter 6. The Poultry and Pet Show today is a very popular part of the show. Children, especially, enjoy the animals and birds. Poultry producers and fanciers continue to compete.

LIGHT HORSE MANAGEMENT INSTRUCTION - U OF M TECHNICAL COLLEGE

The educational arm of the University located at Crookston has always figured strongly in providing expertise for several facets of the Winter Shows and this leadership continues today. One difference today is that the University of Minnesota Technical College makes direct use of the Winter Shows facilities in its educational programming. Quoting from Gary C. McVey, head of the Division of Agriculture:

"The light horse management program of the University of Minnesota, Crookston, has utilized the facilities of the Red River Valley Winter Shows since 1972. When the program began, it was located in the Red River Valley Winter Shows barns located west of the south arena. During several summers, the program utilized the old Agassiz Riders Club barn which was located where the new College stabling facility is today."

McVey continues, "In 1977, an idea was developed in which the Red River Valley Winter Shows would extend their educational thrust in northwestern Minnesota by building a stable and an arena usable as a teaching-riding laboratory. The stable and arena would be leased by the Technical College. Accordingly, the

RED RIVER VALLEY WINTER SHOWS
We Wish You The Best On Your 75th Anniversary

MARVIN LUMBER AND CEDAR CO.
WARROAD, MINNESOTA
old Agassiz Riders barn was razed the summer of 1977 and plans and specifications were developed for a new modern stabling facility, and bids were let. I acted as superintendent of the construction for the new facility. By January, 1978, construction proceeded to the point where the light horse management program could be moved to the new facility. On Sunday afternoon, January 9, the horses were led through waist-high snow to a new home.”

Since 1978, the College has leased the new stable for housing the horses and the north arena as an educational teaching laboratory. In addition, the College rents the ten-acre parking lot to the west of the buildings for an exercise area and for limited pasture. The College also leased a piece of land from the National Guard and has established an outdoor riding arena and exercise standard. This has proved to be an excellent arrangement for the College and the students majoring in light horse management.

A first class stabling and training facility has been provided, with no building investment cost to the taxpayers of the State of Minnesota. Instead, local institutions cooperated to provide this useful, educational facility for studies of the Technical College. Several workshops and club shows under the auspices of the College are held in the facilities during the year.

FOOD SERVICE
The food service concession in the new facilities north of Crookston has always been maintained by the board of managers. Their policy is to maximize the profits from the food service to assist in meeting the capital debt each year. The food service facilities have been improved from time to time. Currently, the public seems reasonably happy with the short-order type of service provided.

There is a policy against admitting concessioners who make food service their major activity. One booth has been permitted, the 4-H group of West Polk County, where the 4-H’ers and their leaders can set up a booth to sell ice cream to show visitors as a club fund-raising project. Otherwise, all food service is a function of the Winter Shows board of managers. Many visitors to the Winter Shows are on a midwinter outing and may wish for more than the short order service available at the arena. The city of Crookston has several excellent dining facilities which are well patronized by show visitors.

Fun at the Winter Shows. Tug-o’-war is spirited fun for the muscular.

BETWEEN SHOW ACTIVITIES
The large floor space of the arenas and barns has developed some use between each Winter Show. March is popular for farm sales. Financial organizations suggest that a farm sale this time of the year in the Winter Shows building will increase the income from their sales more than enough to pay the moving cost and renting the arena.

Several educational functions of rather substantive influence are held annually, including the International Sugarbeet Growers Institute, sugar-beet growers from Minnesota, North Dakota and Manitoba and the largest of its kind in the USA. The Red River Valley Beef Cattlemen’s Institute is the largest single beef cattle educational function in any part of the Red River Basin annually. The College, too, conducts light horse management clinics and training activities. A Home and Hobby Show was recently held and was successful at its first try in 1984. The regional high schools and some colleges rent the space for training and holding track meets in the spring each year, as weather in the Red River Basin isn’t always conducive to outside track activity.

Any group may contract to lease the buildings, providing their use fits the facilities available in the building and is in keeping with the general mission of the Winter Shows. The facilities were built for the Winter Shows exposition and may not be suited to all needs.

The Winter Shows properties belong to all the people in northwestern Minnesota. Consequently, the rental fees are modest; however, any group renting the facility must contract for such use, must carry its own insurance, and must pay the modest rental fee plus the costs of janitorial help, lights, heat, and maintenance.