

2018

FRIEND OF THE IOWA BEEF EXPO

Mike Sorensen

by Kellie Carolan

Mike Sorensen is a familiar face at the Iowa Beef Expo. Having seen the beef expo from a variety of seats throughout its history and being a part of its success, he has been selected as the 2018 Friend of the Iowa Beef Expo.

MIKE SORENSEN FAMILY (MSF) CATTLE

Hereford cattle have been a staple of the Sorensen family for many years. Ray Sorensen, Mike's dad, started with Hereford commercial cows and fed many Hereford influenced cattle, which was typical of the Iowa cattle production in those days. As the boys, Mike and Jerry, and sister, Lori, got into 4-H, they started winning the rate of gains at the local county fair. In 1966, the Sorensen family had top four calves in the rate of gain class. Then 1967, they earned the top five places plus sixth and ninth place at the county fair. It was about this time, the family made the addition of purebred Herefords to the operation. Both boys, showed at the numerous open class fairs around the state.

As the continental breeds were coming in to the states in the 1970s and Mike 'slipped off' the Hereford train for a few years. He decided to crossbreed the Herefords to raise club calves. He soon realized that his cow herd needed the maternal genetics of the Hereford and Angus, so back to the Herefords he went!

After Ray and Eileen had sold their cows, the kids suggested over the Thanksgiving meal that they slow down, find something they enjoy and travel a bit. Fast forward to Christmas dinner, Ray proudly proclaimed that he and Eileen had taken everyone's advice. He told the family that they had purchased 10 Hereford heifers to enjoy and that

they would 'travel' to the back of the farm once a day to look at them!

Mike Sorensen Family cattle pride themselves on maintaining an excellent line-up of proven genetics with a strong maternal focus. They sell cattle and genetics at the Iowa Beef Expo, on an annual online sale and privately off the farm.

THE SORENSEN FAMILY

Mike and his wife, Dixie, have been married 46 years and have three grown children plus seven grandchildren. You can tell in any conversation with Mike or Dixie that their family, especially those grandchildren, are their pride and joy!

Their oldest daughter, Heidi Rohrig, is involved in sales for Livestock Plus. She helps acquire ads and keeps producers on their toes with deadline reminders. Along with her husband, Matt, and three kids, Tucker, Taylor and Treva, actively raise and promote swine raised on their farm near Orient. Their son, Ray, most commonly known as 'Bubba', is the famed Freedom Rock painter. He started painting the original Freedom Rock in May of 1999 and it has grown to a 99 Iowa County project plus a 50 states project. His wife, Maria, works fulltime keeping the business side of Bubba's painting in order. They have two kids, Independence and Michael Ray. Their youngest daughter, Mandi Eisbach, is assistant manager for HIM and medical coder for the Adair County Memorial Hospital. Her husband, Brian, is banker, loan officer and financial advisor for the FNB bank in Greenfield. They have two kids Isabelle and Maxwell.

THE LIVESTOCK PLUS

Mike is most notably known to cattle producers young and old through the Livestock Plus. He got his start in purebred livestock promotion when he was part of the Iowa Cattlemen's Convention tradeshow in downtown Des Moines. He was working the

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Iowa Salers booth and next door was the booth for the Midwest Marketer. In those days convention ran several days and over the course of that time, Mike visited with Lori Schooley about how the Midwest Marketer needed a purebred livestock section. Shortly thereafter, Mike started work for the Midwest Marketer, creating and growing the newly added position.

After a couple years, Mike felt there was a need for a glossy magazine for the purebred folks. Mike set out to make his vision a reality. In two week time, the first Livestock Plus rolled off the printer. It was eight pages long with two pages of paid advertising. It circulated to about 800 producers. The second month the publication grew to 16 pages with almost half of them being paid advertising and the circulation grew to over 2,000 producers. It was after the third magazine at 24 pages in length the Livestock Plus out grew the local printer and they haven't looked back since! The current publication is 80 plus pages each month and is mailed

to more than 16,000 mailboxes that have requested the publication.

Today, the Livestock Plus is a partnership effort with the Allen family from Minnesota and employs several staff that along with Mike, pack their bags and crisscrosses the country talking cattle and helping make sales happen. The five day run of purebred sales at the Iowa Beef Expo takes a team and Mike, as well as his staff, are key players from start to finish.

SALERS AND THE IOWA BEEF BREEDS COUNCIL

When Mike's kids started showing, his dad purchased two Salers heifers from Loren Scott for Heidi and Bubba to show. Both excelled in the show ring, made great cows and landed Mike on both the Iowa Salers Board and on the Iowa Beef Breeds Council as the Salers representative. Additionally, in 1996, he served as the organization's president for two years. When asked about the Iowa Beef Expo, Mike is quick to say,

"Everyone that has been as part of the board or staff should take great pride in the Iowa Beef Expo. It has always been the focus of the organization (Iowa Beef Breeds Council) to keep the expo growing and plan for its future. Everyone in the county looks to Iowa and tries to copy what we have accomplished."

CONGRATULATIONS

Over the years, Mike has logged many miles working for the cattle industry. He credits a 'special bride' that is willing put up with long hours, days and sometimes weeks away from home and lots of phone calls. In recent years, Dixie has gotten to travel a bit more and they 'see the country' even if it is in the middle of the night!

Mike, your fellow purebred breeders and the Iowa Beef Beef Council would like to thank you and your family for all the hours you have devoted to our industry and specifically the Iowa Beef Expo.

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