

The 2017 Otsego County Fair is dedicated to

Denise Gapinski

Denise is a lifelong resident of Otsego County. She has been married to Bernard (Bernie) Gapinski for 39 years, has two sons Chad and his wife Nora and Nathan and his partner Ryan. Her commitment to the Otsego County Fair spans almost 30 years.

It all started in 1987, when Chad was nine and wanted to join 4-H to raise a steer for the fair. Denise later became the 4-H Livestock Committee Secretary. She would help the guys (Bob, Ken, Dan & Ben) in the livestock barn cleaning, setting up pens, painting, ordering trophies and whatever else needed to be done. At age eleven, Nathan decided he too wanted a steer for the fair. The summers until the boys graduated were spent training steers, hauling hay and helping in the livestock barn. Denise started the Kountry Kickers Club becoming a 4-H Leader made up of primarily market steers.



Denise was originally appointed to the fair board in 1997 as a Director. In 1999 she became Secretary/Treasurer and then in November 2000 held the Treasurer position until January 2003. At that time she became Treasurer Exec until January 2015, when she was appointed to Manager/Treasurer Exec. Since joining the fair board she has been a very active member. Denise is always willing to help with any task to be done on the grounds. In an effort to make Fair week a success; she even volunteered to clean the bathrooms with Cyn. Denise has become everyone's go to person, keeping everyone going in the right direction, getting the grounds ready for special events and the fair week. Prior to work bees Denise will create a list of tasks that need to be completed to get the grounds up to par for the fair. On work bee nights for helping, she prepares a meal for everyone as a "Thank You." Living less than a mile from the fairgrounds, Denise will periodically drive through the grounds ensuring lights are off and gates are locked. She is on call 24/7 for issues that may arise.

Denise spends most days in front of the computer working on one thing or another depending on the time of year. During the winter/spring the premium book is her main focus. Fair is her life. However, she does make time to visit her son Chad and Nora in Interlochen and her son Nathan and Ryan in Grand Rapids, but even then she receives texts, emails and phone calls regarding the fair.

When work bees begin Denise can be found participating in many different roles. She is on many committees including; advertising, finance, policies and procedures, emergency planning, premium book, storage, work crew, sponsorship, Big Ticket, UMS Bump N Run Championship and concessions, off-season special events, carnival, grandstand events, outdoor vendors and the queen's pageant. She is responsible for the website, FaceBook page, ground rental contracts, carnival & ticket booths, ticket takers & sellers, 50/50's, ordering and purchasing, fair week contracts, livestock auction billings and anything involving the treasurer position.



A very important part of the Otsego County Fair is the sponsorship program. Denise has taken on this task because it is a very important part of the fair. She is responsible for contacting sponsors, following-up and sending out sponsorship packets. When it comes time to make phone calls to sponsors, she does what it takes to make it happen by recruiting help. The sponsorship program has become very successful and would like to thank her for a job well done.

Denise is not just an asset to the fair board, but an essential leader and worker for the ongoing success of the fair. In her many years of involvement, the fair has become a huge part of her life with countless hours of dedication. From the early morning and the late nights, Denise can be found, thinking fair or dreaming fair! Her terrific organizational skills have helped her become a key asset and the backbone of the fairgrounds. Denise is always reliable and dedicated; if she starts a project, it is completed.

At the Otsego County Fair we are like one big family and Denise is one of those people that make you proud to be part of that family. We are honored to have her as part of the Otsego County Fair and not sure what we would do without her. She says everyone is replaceable, including herself. It is hard to find a volunteer who works so tirelessly and so long for an organization. Denise has been a valuable part of our "Fair Family" for many years.

The Otsego County Fair Board of Directors, Associate Members and our community would like to "THANK YOU, DENISE" for your dedication to the Otsego County Fair.

Congratulations, Denise!