

Earl Warren Showgrounds Foundation Kicks Off Fundraising Campaign

A dedicated group of Santa Barbarans has launched a non-profit to fund improvements that will elevate Earl Warren Showgrounds to best of breed status and renew a treasured Santa Barbara tradition.

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Santa Barbara, California, October 11, 2007 – The Earl Warren Showgrounds Foundation has emerged to serve as the fundraising arm for one of California and Santa Barbara's most prominent landmarks. After a half century of bringing a wealth of education, competition and entertainment to Santa Barbarans, Earl Warren Showgrounds is about to undergo major change.

According to Foundation President Kevin Snow "Our Showgrounds have served the community well for a long time now. Year round this facility brings us concerts, horse, dog, cat and flower shows, the Fair, Fiesta Rodeo, 4H events, offsite wagering, antique, computer and home improvement shows...the list is nearly endless. All accomplished while receiving no tax dollars to support operations. Income received from rentals for meetings, sales and other activities help, but the true economic engine is the regularly scheduled major exhibitions and competitions we host. Horse shows that have come here for decades and are scheduled years in advance are a prime example.

Fifty years of these activities, however, has taken its toll. We now face the challenge of updating the facility to meet current standards and attract larger, high revenue events. For horse shows alone this requires upgrading two existing arenas and constructing a new regulation size ring and warm-up arena. These rings will include new drainage and footing, judges' and announcers' booths, fencing, sound system and seating all of which gives us improved functionality, added safety and greater comfort."

The Showgrounds opened in 1958 and immediately became the home of the West's longest running horse show – The Santa Barbara National. Since then all the other activities that bring so much to so many have become regulars at Earl Warren. In 2007 the Santa Barbara Fair and Expo alone saw over 50,000 visitors who not only enjoyed great family fun but provided an income boost to many local businesses. It's a unique part of local culture that brings much to the region and due to its self-funding structure is not threatened during periods of California fiscal crisis.

The Foundation, dedicated to making needed upgrades with minimal schedule disruption, has thus far been busy planning and preparing. This work has included creating an advisory board, touring key facilities and consulting with specialists on planned improvements, laying out specifications, establishing budgets and schedules, organizing a website and other tools, completing state required filings and more.

Accordingly an introductory presentation by Earl Warren C.E.O. Scott Grieve at the Santa Barbara Yacht Club's Monday Lunch Forum on October 15 will mark the official launch of fundraising efforts. The plan is to approach the public and business communities with a number of programs that will quickly generate needed capital to get the project underway.

Snow continues, "With so much of our 'get ready' now completed we figure it's time to spread the word. We have a great group with a lot key support and now want all of Santa Barbara to know what we plan to achieve. We're looking to raise \$1,200,000 in a very short time so that our initial work can be completed between the Santa Barbara National Amateur Horse Show in November and the National Horse Show next July. This will allow the Showgrounds to remain open throughout while this first round of upgrades are completed."

The import of the Foundation's work and direction are not lost on C.E.O. Grieve "This group has come together at a critical time for the Showgrounds. We have this window in our schedule and plans so far are right on target. The initial upgrades will attract the type of equine events that can help insure a solid future. This work would be much more difficult to achieve without a non-profit like the Foundation involved to provide the public and business communities a chance to help and receive tax benefits that might not otherwise be possible. It's a great set-up and we have a tight knit working relationship geared to accomplish much."

A number of fundraising activities are scheduled for upcoming weeks offering a wide range of ways that all can contribute. As Vice-President Diane Isaacson puts it "We want everybody to be a part of improving this facility. We're looking for large corporate assistance as well as help from families and individuals all of whom enjoy the many benefits that the Showgrounds provide. Every single event that comes here will benefit from the improvements we have planned. We want people to feel good about helping us and encourage not only donations but comments and suggestions as well."

Details of on-going progress will be provided as work gets underway and the community can reach the Santa Barbara Showgrounds Foundation through its website (<http://www.ewsfoundation.org>) or by email to info@ewsfoundation.org.

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