

2025 WATERTOWN WINTER FARM SHOW DEDICATED TO Dan Engebretson



By Twila Schmitt, Contributing Writer

Dan Engebretson's life has intersected with the Watertown Winter Farm Show for several decades. Whether during his time as an educator, banker or Watertown Area Chamber of Commerce President, his contributions have impacted the success of the show.

This year, Engebretson will be recognized during the 80th annual Watertown Winter Farm Show for his service.

"My first memory of the Farm Show was the warm welcome from all the exhibitors, other bankers, ranchers, farmers and the extension service," said Engebretson.

The Watertown Area Chamber of Commerce Ag Committee, which organizes the Farm Show, each year honors an individual or family who has spent years contributing to its success by dedicating the Farm Show to them. In 2025, two individuals will share the honor - Dan Engebretson of Watertown and Gale Filipek of Raymond.

The 80th Watertown Winter Farm Show is scheduled for February 12-15, 2025, at the Codington County Extension Complex.

Originally from Pierre, Engebretson met his wife, Mary, while the two attended Northern State University. Their teaching careers brought them to Watertown in the early 1970s. He taught social studies, history and civics at Watertown Junior High for six years and then took a position as principal at Parkston.

"I see students to this day from my teaching days in Watertown," said Engebretson. "And some of them are even reaching retirement age."

In 1979, Engebretson began his 33-year career with Farm Credit Services of America (then Federal Land Bank) which would eventually bring him back to Watertown. Soon after his arrival, he became involved with the Chamber Ag Committee, serving as Chairman of the Ag Committee in 1988.

"Recognizing Dan during this 80th year of the Farm Show is like taking a page from the Chamber history book," said Tim Sheehan, President and CEO of the Watertown Area Chamber of Commerce. "He served as Chamber President in 1992-93 and was part of the Ag Committee for more than a decade. He's truly been part of the community's history."

Engebretson said he was "surprised" when he was told about his selection for the 80th Annual Watertown Winter Farm Show dedication. However, he's looking forward to reconnecting with folks that he hasn't seen in many years.

"Dan really knows how important volunteers are to keep the Farm Show running smoothly," said Ag Committee member Chuck Langner. "From the beginning of his time on the Ag Committee, he's been instrumental in making sure people show up in great numbers to volunteer."

Looking back on his years of involvement with the Watertown Winter Farm Show, Engebretson recalls planning and building the exhibit hall, many improvements to the barn and show ring and the opportunity to meet people from all walks of life each year at the Codington County Extension Complex. His son, Tom, has followed in his footsteps and has also served on the Ag Committee for a number of years.

Engebretson said Federal Land Bank (now

Farm Credit Services of America) was one of the founding members of the Watertown Winter Farm Show and continues to have a booth 80 years later.

"We never made any loans at the Farm Show, but it was a good chance to meet up with people and build relationships," he said. "We all worked together during those days. There was no competition because we were all there for one purpose."

Following Dan's retirement in 2012, he and Mary enjoy spending as much time as possible with family including their four grandkids who are now in their teens and 20s. Their son Tom and his wife Eva, and their daughter Kate and her husband Jim Brown all live in Watertown.

The couple keep active all year long with fishing in the summer at the Missouri River and wintering in Lake Havasu, Arizona. His time in the fall is spent hunting pheasants and ducks.

Engebretson appreciates his time on the Chamber Ag Committee and feels the Watertown Winter Farm Show remains relevant because it offers the latest in agricultural developments from the exhibitors, displays the big gains in the seed industry, and showcases improvements in purebred cattle.

"Future farmers and farm families have an amazing opportunity to interact," he said "Ag is the number one industry in South Dakota."

Congratulations, Dan Engebretson!

2025 WATERTOWN WINTER FARM SHOW DEDICATED TO Gale Filipek



By Twila Schmitt, Contributing Writer

Gale Filipek of Raymond views the Watertown Winter Farm Show as far more than a “few-days-a-year” event. As current breed manager for the Simmental Show & Sale, he sees the annual show as a reunion of friends from all the different breeds. This year, Filipek will be recognized during the 80th Annual Watertown Winter Farm Show for his decades of service.

The Watertown Area Chamber of Commerce Ag Committee, which organizes the Watertown Winter Farm Show, each year honors an individual or family who has spent years contributing to its success by dedicating the Farm Show to them. In 2025, two individuals will share the honor – Gale Filipek and Dan Engebretson.

The 80th Watertown Winter Farm Show is scheduled for February 12-15, 2025, at the Codington County Extension Complex.

Filipek purchased his first heifer at the Watertown Winter Farm Show in 1991. He began consigning three years after that. This year marks his 34th consecutive year of participation in the Farm Show.

“I need to thank Rod Hurlbut for getting me started,” said Filipek. “Without him, I wouldn’t be here today.”

Filipek said the Watertown Winter Farm Show provides an extremely valuable way for small breeders to get started. “While me and my grandson don’t have enough livestock for our own sale, we can bring them here and get connected with buyers,” he said.

“We’re all in the same boat, rowing for the same purpose,” he added.

Gale and his wife, Mary, have looked forward to attending the Watertown Winter Farm Show since their kids (who now have children of their own) were little.

“The fun part about the Farm Show for us is that it was our family’s winter vacation,” said Filipek. “Where we stayed, the kids could go swimming and most of the people we knew stayed in the same hotel. You could renew your friendships and meet new friends.”

Filipek believes another reason the Winter Farm Show continues to be important is because it “shows the city kids” that their food doesn’t simply come from the store. He recalls many years of seeing families and daycare providers making their way through the barns.

“I remember a little guy once who stuck out his hand to pet a heifer and instead was licked half way up his arm,” said Filipek. “He won’t soon forget that.”

Filipek recently celebrated his 30th year as a 4-H leader of the Raymond 4-H Club. His wife, Mary, jokes that he’s been called “the oldest 4-H member in the state.” While the Filipeks farmed for many years near Raymond, they now live in town.

Asked about improvements he has seen at the Winter Farm Show over the years, Filipek mentioned that having better wash racks and a much-improved public address system are beneficial. And while the general public might not notice, he says several changes around the show ring, right down to the wood chips, have made a huge difference for those who show livestock.

Tim Sheehan, President and CEO of the Watertown Area Chamber of Commerce, said attending the Watertown Winter Farm Show continues to be a tradition for many families – and that honoring Gale Filipek fits right in with that tradition.

“Gale is a wonderful example of someone who sees the importance of passing along skills and knowledge to the next farm generation,” said Sheehan.

This past year, Filipek Family Simmentals showed a Grand Champion Simmental bull at the South Dakota State Fair. A few years ago, Gale was honored by the South Dakota Simmental Association as a producer.

“I don’t go looking for awards. If they come, of course, I’m honored.”

“When Chuck (Langner) showed up at the breed meeting to let me know about this dedication, you could have knocked me over with a feather,” he said.

Gale and Mary have been married for 51-1/2 years. They enjoy spending time with their six grandkids, ranging in age from 8 months to 27 years. Their daughter Heather and husband R.J. Hamann live near Raymond, while their son Joe Filipek and his wife Vicky live in Milford, Nebraska. An avid Minnesota sports fan, Filipek regularly follows the Vikings, Twins and Timberwolves, but added that he’s been an L.A. Dodgers fan since 1954.

“I’d say I’ve had a pretty good year,” he added. Congratulations, Gale Filipek!