

Miner County Show Continues Growth

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HOWARD - Although too young to sign up for cell phone service or buy seed corn for the spring planting season, Hanna Peterson, 5, of Fedora stayed busy Wednesday at the Miner County Farm and Home Show by collecting free trinkets at the vendor booths.

According to Peterson's mother, Vicki Vining, the draw of the freebies was too great and her daughter had to visit the booths set up in the former National Guard Armory in Howard.

"That's what we have to make time for - to collect the pens, pencils and candy," Vining said. "We collect anything that's free."

Peterson picked up a sticker shaped like a badge, a lollipop, a pencil and a hockey card at the booth belonging to the Miner County Sheriff's Department. Those items went into a plastic bag that was given away by another vendor.

The sheriff's office was only one of the 50 businesses and organizations represented at the farm and home show. The sheriff's booth stood among others that represented crop insurance, agricultural co-op and advertising businesses and groups such as the local FFA chapter, Miner County Ambulance and Howard Fire Department.

The show opened at noon Wednesday and closed at 8 p.m. It reopens for a second and final session from 9 a.m. to 3 p.m. today.

Howard Mayor Larry Gauger said five other sponsors wanted to set up displays, but the armory didn't have the room. Gauger has helped organize the booths on the show floor for about 12 years. When he started, the show consisted of 15 to 17 displays - not enough to fill the building.

He and other organizers went to work rounding up additional booth sponsors and building the metal and fabric partitions for the booths.

"We went out and advertised and actively recruited people to join the show," Gauger said. "We sent out applications to businesses asking them to join and went to work at building the booth cur-

tains and partitions."

Local groups such as Miner County Community Revitalization, Howard Community and Howard Service clubs and the county government donated money for metal frames and fabric to build the partitions. Women in the Civic League and Double B clubs sewed the fabric and a local farmer welded and painted the metal frames.

The new look for the farm and home show debuted in 2001 and Gauger said the sponsors have enjoyed the results of all that work.

"I think what we did really added to the show," Gauger said. "The businesses have more impressive displays and the visitors can see more clearly where one booth stops and another starts."

The extra effort that improved the farm and home show also helped maintain a 40-year-old tradition in Howard. The first two Miner County Farm and Home shows were held in Carthage, but the event was moved to Howard in 1964.

The concession stand run by the Women's Civic League has provided one constant at all of the farm and home shows in Howard. Joanne Sherman, of Howard, helped serve food at the first show and still helps in the kitchen each year. Sherman was preparing soup Wednesday and remarked that she had the cooking down to a science.

The volunteers prepare gallons of chili, chicken noodle, vegetable beef and broccoli cheese soups in large roasters and also serve hot dogs and barbecues to hungry visitors. The Civic League also asks each member to donate three pies to cut into slices and sell as dessert.

The women's group donates the money earned from the food sales to community projects, including a new swimming pool, books for the library and city park improvements.

"It's a lot of work, but it's also a lot of fun," Sherman said. "At the end of the show, we sell any leftover pie for a quarter. I think some people stay just for that sale."

To celebrate the 40th anniversary, the Howard Community Club is holding a drawing at 3 p.m. today to give away \$100 worth of Miner County Bucks.

The Howard Service Club will serve a free dinner at 6:30 tonight and present its annual awards tonight for business, employee, farm family and person of the year. The Miner County Conservation District also will announce the names of local residents who won awards for the best conservation practices in the area.