



**9:00AM – 4:00PM**

**FAMILY FRIENDLY**

The Watertown Winter Farm Show is a four-day event filled with entertainment and education for all ages. For 78 years, the show has been an outlet for the agricultural community to share new programs, opportunities and ideas. Featured events include a State Crop Show, livestock shows and sales, home and family programs, educational presentations, commercial exhibits and so much more!

For more information and a full schedule, visit [watertownwinterfarmshow.com](http://watertownwinterfarmshow.com).

The Watertown Area Chamber of Commerce Ag Committee, which organizes the Watertown Winter Farm Show, annually honors an individual or family who has spent years contributing to its success by dedicating the Farm Show to their name. This year, we are honoring two individuals: Jeff Heesch and John Weismantel.

**2023 WATERTOWN WINTER FARM SHOW DEDICATED TO**



**Jeff Heesch**



**John Weismantel**

# 2023 WATERTOWN WINTER FARM SHOW DEDICATED TO Jeff Heesch



By Twila Schmitt  
Contributing Writer

When it comes to the Watertown Winter Farm Show, Jeff Heesch believes the future is as important as the past. Even as this Ag Committee veteran is being honored this year, he credits the next generation with keeping the Farm Show's reputation strong.

"It's not just having younger blood involved, but it's seeing a true passion in these young men and women who wish to see the Farm Show continue to grow, evolve and be the best," he said.

The Watertown Area Chamber of Commerce Ag Committee, which organizes the Watertown Winter Farm Show, annually honors an individual or family who has spent years contributing to its success by dedicating the Farm Show to their name. In 2023, two individuals will share this honor – Jeff Heesch and John K. Weismantel.

Heesch, Senior Vice President of First Bank & Trust in Watertown, served as president of the organization for twelve years. He joined the organization in 2008 as Community Bank president. Prior to joining First Bank & Trust, he served as Vice President for Plains Commerce Bank in Watertown for seven years. He was recently recognized by the South Dakota Bankers Association for his 40-year career in the banking industry.

Heesch grew up on a farm near Elkton. He attended Pipestone Area Vocational Technical Institute where he earned an Associate Degree in Ag Banking and also attended Graduate School of Banking in Boulder, Colorado. He worked in Flandreau, Clearwater, Nebraska, Midland and Dawson, Minnesota before moving to Watertown in 2001.

Heesch said his nearly immediate involvement with the Watertown Winter Farm Show "was probably Chuck's fault," as they moved next door to the Langners when the family first moved to Watertown. Since that

time he has served several roles on the Ag Committee, including Chairman. Heesch is encouraged to see a new generation of young professionals becoming involved in the Ag Committee.

"They are a big part of the Winter Farm Show, but also become involved in other events throughout the year, such as the annual 4-H BBQ and Adopt the First Grade," he said.

The next generation is not afraid to ask questions and say, "What if we try it this way?"

The 78th Watertown Winter Farm Show is scheduled for February 8-11, 2023, at the Codington County Extension Complex. Heesch said he is slowly getting used to the idea of being honored.

"Following an Ag Committee meeting Chuck (Langner) asked me to stick around. When Chuck and Keith (Mack) told me, I was really shocked. There are so many others on the Ag Committee that could get this honor before I did," he said.

Travis Nelsen, Ag Committee Chairman, said that it is truly an honor to recognize Heesch as one of the Farm Show Dedication recipients for his many years of involvement in the Watertown Winter Farm Show.

"Jeff has always been a strong supporter of the Farm Show throughout his career and has been a long-time active Ag committee member helping promote Ag in our community," said Nelsen.

Heesch is a member of the SDBA, Ag Committee, past member of Business Industry School Coalition (BISCO) and Lions Club. In his free time, he enjoys being on his pontoon on Lake Cochrane and spending time with his family. He and his wife, Kelly, just celebrated 40 years of marriage and have five grown children: Tara, Christopher, Abbey, Alex and Steven.

"My family is everything to me," said Heesch.

"Our five grown children live in Oregon, North Dakota, Montana, Iowa and Texas." They also have twelve grandchildren – and love to visit them as often as they can. "Spoiling them is on the top of our list of things to do. We have so much fun doing that and then turning them back to their parents."

Heesch added that he also enjoys "a little farm time" at his brother-in-law and nephew's farm, helping with spring planting and harvest.

"I was born and raised on the farm and after being off the farm for 40-plus years, I feel it is still in my blood. Maybe that's part of why the Winter Farm Show is so important to me."

Heesch reflected on the many changes he's seen at the farm show during the past two decades – many involving technology. The Extension Complex now has more lighting, a better sound system, stronger Wi-Fi and electronic information screens throughout the farm show grounds.

And Heesch believes the Watertown Winter Farm Show's strongest days are yet to come.

"We'll continue to draw huge crowds from the region and many sectors in Watertown. It's beyond farmers and extends to all the businesses that rely on agriculture, such as elevators, veterinarians, retail and of course, banking," he said.

While the annual February schedule can be challenging, Heesch believes offering "something to look forward to" in the winter months makes it the perfect timing. The addition of online auctions over the past years have helped sales, no matter what the weather brings.

"There's always a lot of work to do, but we have fun. It's truly the best show around."

Congratulations, Jeff Heesch!



# 2023 WATERTOWN WINTER FARM SHOW DEDICATED TO John K. Weismantel



*By Twila Schmitt  
Contributing Writer*

John K. Weismantel has been a behind-the-scenes fixture at the Watertown Winter Farm Show since 1983. This year, he will be honored during the 78th Annual Watertown Winter Farm Show.

The Watertown Area Chamber of Commerce Ag Committee, which organizes the Watertown Winter Farm Show, annually honors an individual or family who has spent years contributing to its success by dedicating the Farm Show to their name. In 2023, two individuals will share this honor – John K. Weismantel and Jeff Heesch.

Weismantel, Owner/Operator of Weismantel Rent-All, followed in his father's footsteps in the rental business. The senior Weismantel, who managed a successful business in Aberdeen, saw growing opportunity in the Watertown area.

"In 1983, my dad and I approached the Watertown Chamber and Winter Farm Show committee, asking for the opportunity to provide pipe and drapery curtains for the exhibit booths," said Weismantel. "Fortunately, they allowed us to provide our product and it's been a great marriage for 40 years."

The 78th Watertown Winter Farm Show is scheduled for February 8-11, 2023, at the Codington County Extension Complex.

Over the past four decades, Weismantel has seen incredible growth at the Farm Show. He has served as a member of the Ag Committee, bringing expertise on booths, advertising, lifts and signage.

"They went from 50 booths in the beginning to 200 booths now," he said. "When the Ag Committee sees additional growth coming, they always give me advance notice – and we've always been ready to accommodate."

The pipe and drapery – weighing more than

15,000 pounds, are loaded in two trucks and brought to the Extension Complex just ahead of the Winter Farm Show each year.

Tim Sheehan, president and CEO of the Watertown Area Chamber of Commerce, said honoring Weismantel with the Watertown Winter Farm Show Dedication is a perfect choice due to his long-time involvement in the Ag community. "John knows so many people by name, and they know him as well. He's truly become part of the Watertown Winter Farm Show tradition."

Weismantel credited his father with teaching him how to relate to people.

"When I came to Watertown with my dad in 1983, he took me around and introduced me to many of the Chamber and Farm Show Committee members. He was proud to know them and develop a friendship with all of them," said Weismantel.

"Years later, I would have my wife and three kids help set up, tear down and everything in between. I found myself taking Becky, Jared, Josh and Jenna around and introducing them to the Chamber and Committee members just like my dad did with me," he said. "We have created friendships and memories with many of the Chamber and Committee members."

When two current committee members (Chuck Langner and Keith Mack) stopped by his business recently to "ask a few questions" about the upcoming Winter Farm Show, Weismantel said he was caught off guard.

"When Keith and Chuck stopped by here in person and asked if I would have the pipe and drape ready for this year's Winter Farm Show, I was kind of startled. Then they told me about the dedication," he said. "I was very humbled. And I asked if the other four they asked before

me didn't accept."

All joking aside, Weismantel takes his role in the Watertown Winter Farm Show very seriously. One suggested "improvement" over the years was the result of the frigid temperatures that grip Watertown each February. After several years of setting up ice cold pipe and drape, Weismantel had an idea! He asked whether his trucks could be parked inside the building for a few days prior to set up day.

"Now we drive the vehicles right in the building and park them under the hanging furnaces. This makes set up much more pleasant," he said.

Another wonderful change happened when dozens of students from Lake Area Tech began to help unload the trucks and set up the booths. Since each of the metal base plates weighs 25 pounds, having some young volunteers is a bonus.

Weismantel and his wife, Becky, have three grown children and one grandchild (another expected soon). He says his "free time" includes anything with family, building projects and sports – in that order.

A native of Aberdeen, Weismantel earned his degree in business and accounting. Following graduation, he worked several years in the Twins Cities.

"When I turned in the suit for wrenches, it raised a lot of eyebrows," he said. "I went from 40 hour weeks to 70, but I've loved every minute of it."

Weismantel said the Watertown Winter Farm Show holds a close place in his heart as it was his first customer in Watertown. "I took note of everyone I met, as this was going to be home," he said.

Congratulations, John K. Weismantel!