

# Tri-County Antique Club Hosts 31st Annual Olden Days Festival

by Bradley Piros, Reporter  
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DOW - Over the weekend, the Tri-County Antique Club hosted the 31st Annual Olden Days Festival.

According to their website, The Tri-County Antique Club was formed to promote the appreciation of agricultural history, through the restoration and preservation of antique, vintage, and classic automobiles, gasoline and oil engines, gas and steam tractors, farm machinery, and other equipment of historical value. The Olden Days Festival is the Club's annual event to make these available for public viewing.

There was certainly no shortage of that this year.

The event had tons of tractors, implements, antiques, and so much more. The event has been known to have vendors selling assorted foods and goods. Many people set up camp to try and sell off some of their collections of antiques and other items.

What sets this event apart from others like it though is that the Olden Days Festival is primarily a volunteer effort. From the ladies working in the kitchen to the gentleman who drove their collectible tractors for hours to show them off. From the people checking tickets to the ones ensuring the event ran smoothly. They were all volunteers.

Caryl Parsell, one of the event's founders, who is fastly approaching her 90th birthday, said that is what the event is all about.

"You can't believe all the good, faithful workers we have. These men who are retired come out here and mow, trim trees. It's just wonderful. A good group that we have."

Caryl has been part of this festival for many years since her oldest son Arlin Parsell started it back in 1976. She's been working in the kitchen serving up home-style favorites such as pork chops and ham and beans.

She said that Arlin put an ad in the paper saying that anybody interested in antique tractors or engine repair should come on out. Arlin started it as a simple repair business because it's what he loves to do and then it formed into the big two-day festival that it is today.

"Our dream was always to have our own grounds," Caryl said. She mentioned that this festival has bounced around at a few locations including Medora, Jerseyville, and Brighton before it finally settled down in Dow.

She mentioned that all of it was possible with a \$25,000 grant that the Tri-County Antique Club received to get the event up and running in its new hometown.

The Olden Days Festival is as much for the kids as it is for the adults Caryl said. She said that Arlin created "Agriland," the kid-oriented play area on the grounds. There was also the kid's favorite tractor pull-along.





There was so much more to this festival than tractors and antiques. You could've checked out the full operation sawmill, gone inside, and looked at a scrapbook of the event dating back to its first one in 1976. You could've shopped at a mixture of booths selling things like jewelry and home decor or participated in some craft making. There was quite literally fun for the whole family.

Caryl said that there were large crowds for the festival this year in its second year back after the COVID-19 Pandemic.

Such an event does take lots of planning and work.

"It takes a village," Tom Bechtold said, a long-time festival organizer.

The 31st rendition of the festival was a great success. The weather was perfect, there were tons of smiling faces roaming the grounds, and there were plentiful things to keep festival-goers busy.

It's no surprise that people already can't wait for next year.