

## Press release

*For immediate release*

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### **La Crosse Barbed Wire Festival Turns 50 Swap & Sell Kicks off Year-Long Celebration**

**La Crosse, Kansas, March 1, 2016** — Since May 1967, this central Kansas community has been drawing people from across the United States for an unusual common interest - collecting barbed wire. On Thursday, May 5, 2016 the 50th Annual Barbed Wire Festival, hosted by the Kansas Barbed Wire Collectors Association (KBWCA), will kick-off in the museum complex on West First Street at 5:30pm with the official opening ceremony and dedication of a sculpture honoring deceased members of the organization.

On Friday, festivities will begin at 8:00am at the City Auditorium when the annual Swap & Sell opens with collectors from several states displaying historical exhibits and selling barbed wire, antiques, handmade crafts, food, and gift items. Highlighting events will be a display of military memorabilia and a "Veterans Appreciation" tribute with pictures and biographies of local veterans and active duty military. At 6:30pm, the Kansas Barbed Wire Museum will host a Casino Night & Mexican Buffet in the museum galleries. "We had so many great comments from last year's Casino Night that we decided to repeat it," said Brad Penka, KBWCA president and show organizer. For a small donation, participants will enjoy a fabulous Mexican buffet followed by an assortment of free casino-style games. Each person will receive a supply of "Barbed Bucks" that they can "build" for use to bid on valuable prizes during the auction at the conclusion of the evening.

On Saturday, in addition to the Swap & Sell, there will be community garage sales, geo-caching, special events for children and youth, the *World Champion Barbed Wire Splicing Contest* and the annual Barbed Wire Auction. In the splicing contest, contestants repair a break in a replicated fence by splicing the wire. Contestants are judged on time and strength of the splice. The splicing

competition, the first of its kind was developed in 1967 by the Armco Steel Company and Kansas State University. The weekend will conclude on Saturday evening with a black-tie optional "Golden Memories Candlelight Banquet" at 6:30 featuring an hors d'oeuvres bar, live music, and a gourmet meal. Reservations are required.

The celebration will continue following Barbed Wire Weekend. After completing more than 50 successful events in a year for their Golden Anniversary two years ago, Lawrence Erbes, president of the Rush County Historical Society challenged Penka to "follow our lead and host 50 events as well." Over a 50 week period the KBWCA is planning a series of events including historical displays at local festivals, a *Miss Barbed Wire Capital Pageant* in the fall, and the annual *Old-Fashioned Christmas* in November. The celebration will conclude in February 2017 with a special reception celebrating the 50th Anniversary of the founding of the Kansas Barbed Wire Collectors Association.

The Kansas Barbed Wire Collectors Association, Inc., a not-for-profit organization headquartered in La Crosse, Kansas, was chartered in 1967 with a mission to preserve the history of barbed wire and to educate the public about its importance to the development of the United States. The KBWCA operates the Kansas Barbed Wire Museum, a nationally recognized western history museum located in La Crosse.

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