

When the Arabian Horse Show trots into town, Expo Square CEO Mark Andrus said the by-products are long-lasting. Shelves start to empty, and restaurants and hotels begin to fill. "Lowe's comes close to running out of plywood, and Walgreens comes close to running out of basically everything, but they don't," Andrus said. "It's a big time for all our area hotels and restaurants and places like Philbrook and Woolaroc and Gilcrease. And the Brady District, I've heard rave reviews about that." The 2015 U.S. National Arabian and Half-Arabian Championship Horse Show and Shopping Expo continues through Saturday at Expo Square. The 10-day Arabian U.S. Nationals ranks as the most prestigious North American championship in the Arabian show horse industry. Some of the show is constructed from scratch, such as on-site living areas and sleeping areas for staff who manage the horses. "They are entertaining clients and breeders and buyers," said Ray Hoyt, president of VisitTulsa and the Tulsa Sports Commission. "They literally set up hospitality areas in their stall areas where they can talk, and they put in TVs. They buy that material every year here." This marks the eighth consecutive year the event has been held in Tulsa, which has a contractual hold on it through 2017. The Arabian Horse Show was first held at Expo Square in 2008. Before that, the event was held in Albuquerque, New Mexico, and Louisville, Kentucky, which alternated as hosts for years. The extravaganza generates close to \$500,000 in annual rental fees for Expo Square, Andrus said, and boasts a total economic impact, according to Hoyt, of about \$27 million. "Agriculture is the second-largest industry in the state, and equine falls into that," Hoyt said. "So it's really important for our state's economy and state agribusiness, not to mention it's amazing for tourism and our city." Expo Square has undergone a number of upgrades over the years to accommodate horse enthusiasts. They include \$1 million for stalls, \$125,000 for a show wall and \$40,000 for bleachers in the Mustang Arena, and \$460,000 for lights and \$22,000 for a horse rack in the River Spirit Expo Center, Andrus said. "All we care about is making their event the

best it can be today," Andrus said. "Yesterday, we were lucky. Tomorrow is not here, yet. We just care about today. This is an extremely important show to us." Kay Stone Buford of Tulsa is among the many local people who helped bring the event to Tulsa. In the late 2000s, she threw a welcoming party at her then-Blair Mansion home, making sure her Arabian horses were in full view in the back yard. Her Arabians have since been regular competitors in the show, including her three home bred this year. "A lot of work went into upgrading the facilities at the fairgrounds," Buford said. "That's the biggest piece. It can accommodate a show this big. Secondly, we've tried to reach out to the community and inform it of the event because so many do not know what's happening at the fairgrounds. It's a world-acclaimed show, and it deserves our attention." Rhett Morgan 918-581-8395 rhett.morgan@tulsaworld.com Get local news delivered to your inbox! Subscribe to our Daily Headline newsletter. Sign up! \* I understand and agree that registration on or use of this site constitutes agreement to its user agreement and privacy policy.