

# Columbia cattle producers fight hunger with event

## Local artist contributes statue for June fundraiser

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Raising funds for the hungry in South Dakota has become a passion for Ryan Eichler and Josh Larson, two men from Columbia whose families have long been involved in the cattle business.

That desire propelled efforts to raise funds for the South Dakota Cattlemen's Foundation Prime Time Gala by commissioning a sculpture by Aberdeen artist Ben Victor.

A 1/4-scale bronze statue of a cow with her calf, called "Mother's Love," is being created as one of the unique items for auction at the June 14 gala in Sioux Falls.

The event organizers hope to raise \$100,000 with all of the proceeds going to the hunger relief organization that is fighting daily to eliminate hunger across the state.

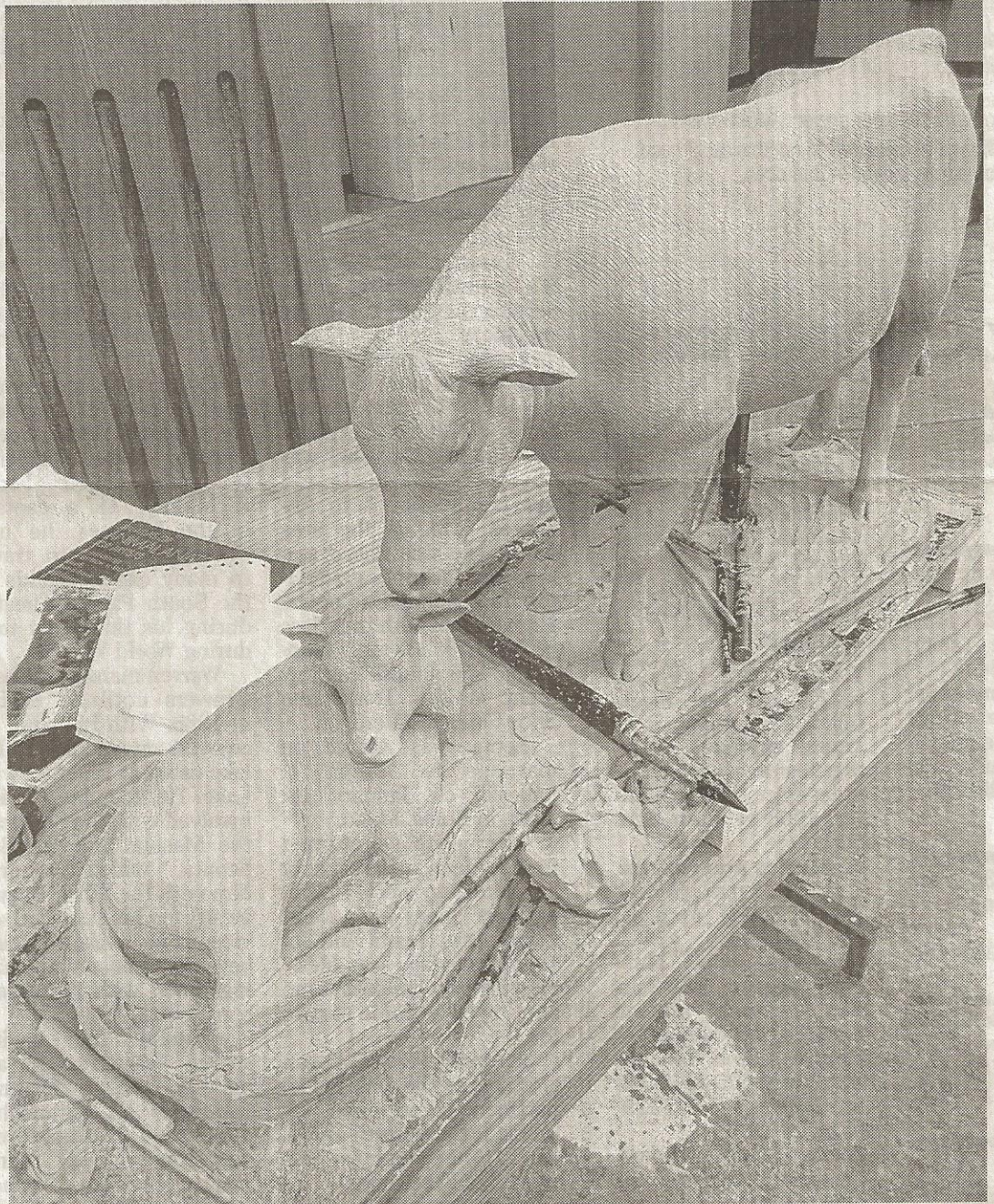
Eichler and Larson approached Victor to see if he could create an appropriate piece that could be auctioned. They wanted to raise awareness for the need for protein among those who struggle with food insecurity.

They didn't realize how appropriate it was to choose this artist.

Victor was just completing a statue of Norman Borlaug, the man often credited with saving more than a billion people worldwide from starvation with his wheat research.

"It goes hand-in-hand with the work that I did earlier on the Norman Borlaug statue," Victor said. "Norman was a hunger fighter, and this group is fighting hunger by raising funds for Feeding South Dakota."

To create a real-life image for "Mother's Love," Larson helped by taking measurements of cows and calves



Crafted by artist Ben Victor of Aberdeen, this clay model called "Mother's Love" will be offered as a bronze statue at the Prime Time Gala event June 14 at the Sioux Falls Arena. American News Photo by Connie Sieh Groop

to give Victor the proper perspective.

"One of the things we decided to focus on was understanding the need for those less fortunate," said Eichler of forming the foundation. "It's become my passion and interest in telling the story of the production of food, specifically the story of beef production."

All 950 tickets have been

sold. After the dinner and speech, country music artist Gary Allan will headline the Prime Time concert at the Sioux Falls Arena.

"We want this to be the premier event for raising funds for Feeding South Dakota," Larson said. "We're confident that people in South Dakota will help us meet our goal."

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### Event details

**What:** Gary Allan concert, with Brett Eldredge

**When:** 8 p.m. June 14

**Where:** Sioux Falls Arena

**How much:** \$25 to \$55, at the arena box office, by phone at 800-745-3000 or through ticketmaster.com and all Ticketmaster locations.