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NEWS RELEASE

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## UFA Steer Classic winner to meet a tasty Chicago Chophouse end

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Calgary -- This specimen is destined for something a little classier than hamburger.

As he has for the better part of a decade, Calgary restaurateur Paul Vickers, owner of Chicago Chophouse, purchased the winning entry in Saturday's annual UFA Steer Classic at the Calgary Stampede.

The 1,319-pound steer, owned by Cochrane's Colby McLeod, is destined to become the feature menu item for events to bolster the Alberta beef industry -- such as the Champion Steer Dinner, a \$150-a-plate gala event, at the Chophouse on Sept. 24.

"We use Alberta beef as a mainstay of everything we do," said Vickers, whose Pennylane Entertainment Group owns several restaurants and nightclubs in Calgary, including Zen 8, Tantra and Cowboys.

"We're buying local, and supporting events like this at the Calgary Stampede is an extension of that. We're ensuring that we continue our support of the Alberta farmer," added Vickers. "This year we'll be holding the Champion Steer Dinner and a BSE research fundraiser.

"We're not just about oil in this town. It's something that's near and dear to our heart, the plight of the Alberta farmer," he said. "Without him, we don't have a business, do we?"

McLeod's animal emerged as the UFA Steer Classic's grand champion out of 86 entries, in addition to winning the Junior division. Meanwhile, a 1,393-pound bovine owned by The Vermilion Group of Streamstown, Alta., was named the show's reserve champion, or runner-up, after claiming top honours in the Open division.

McLeod takes home a grand champion winner's cheque of \$9,000, which was presented by UFA, as well as \$1,000 for best-in-division honours.

"He's won quite a bit this year, and topped 'er off with this one," said McLeod, 17, whose 20-month-old steer was named grand champion at Olds, Bashaw and Josephsburg earlier this year. "You're never really sure what will happen showing steers, but this feels really good."

Saturday's reserve champion steer was raised by Alannah Bryce of Arcola, Sask., and came very close to giving its owners a big two-show pay day. The Vermilion Group's beast had won the Lloydminster Steer Show, a victory worth \$5,000, and would have earned an extra \$5,000 had it also earned Stampede grand champion honours -- a potential windfall of \$20,000.

As it was, the steer's owners had to be content with a \$4,000 cheque in Calgary, presented by Intervet Schering Plough. The animal was purchased by the Canadian Association of Petroleum Landmen.

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"We were that close," said co-owner Susan Draves. "He had done well in Lloydminster, and we figured we had a pretty good shot with him here."

The Canadian Association of Petroleum Landmen will be raffling off the reserve champion steer, with the draw to be held at noon on Sunday, July 12.

"We've done this for the last five years," said Rob Telford, the CAPL's past president. "All the proceeds will be going to the Alberta 4-H Foundation. So far we've raised \$38,000 up to this year."

The UFA Steer Classic's list of grand and reserve breed champions, respectively, is as follows: Nexara Land and Cattle of Drake, Sask., and Rae-Lee Pieschel of Balzac, Alta., in Angus; Flewelling Cattle Co. Ltd. of Bowden, Alta., and Sarah Nixdorff of Airdrie, Alta., in Hereford; Rocky Payne of Streamstown and Adams Hirshe Herefords & Angus of High River, Alta., in Limousin; Mark Draves of Streamstown and Darrell Comazzetto of Kamloops, B.C., in Maine Anjou; Ethan Gosling of Strathmore, Alta., and Barry Fraser of Ardrossan, Alta., in Nuflor Market Heifer; Megan Bond of Cardston, Alta., and Fraser in Murray Grey; Stewart Cattle Co. of Russell, Man., and Fairland Cattle Co. of Penhold, Alta., in Shorthorn; Flewelling Cattle Co. Ltd. and Mark Draves in Simmental; and Notta Ranch of Neilburg, Sask., and Fairland Cattle Co. in Speckle Park. Colton Draves of Streamstown was reserve champion in Junior, while Justamere Farms Ltd. of Lloydminster, Sask., was reserve champion in Open.

Saturday's UFA Steer Classic was conducted by judge Cam Sparrow of Vanscoy, Sask., who told the crowd: "When you get right down to it, it's all about how much they weigh and how much they pay."

Of course, other factors came into play as well. "He's looking for animals that exhibit a lot of muscling, because that translates to a high percentage of meat content in the animal," said Roger Davis, the Stampede's Steer Classic committee chair. "And he's also looking for animals that have enough cover of body fat on them to make the meat marbled and flavorful.

"The end product," added Davis, "is percentage of yield of beef, and the quality of the beef."

The majority of the entries in the UFA Steer Classic will be entered in the Stampede's Carcass Competition on Monday, July 13, at XL Foods Inc., which pays \$3,000 plus the value of the carcass to the grand champion.

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The Calgary Stampede is a volunteer-supported, not-for-profit community organization that preserves and promotes western heritage and values. The Stampede contributes to the quality of life in Calgary and southern Alberta through its world-renowned 10-day Stampede, year-round facilities, western events and several youth and agriculture programs. All revenue is reinvested into Calgary Stampede programs and facilities. For more about the Stampede, visit [www.calgarystampede.com](http://www.calgarystampede.com).