



Illinois
Association
of
Agricultural
Fairs

May 2019

TentTalk

Alexi Bladel Is Crowned as 2019 Queen

What a great 109th IAAF convention we had in January with more than 3,000 in attendance and the crowning of Miss Alexi Bladel of Winnebago County as the new Illinois County Fair Queen.

Thanks to our sponsors, associate members, trade show exhibitors and fairgoers who attended. We are grateful for the support of Luehrs Ideal Rides, North American Midway Entertainment, Allied Specialty Insurance, Illinois Tractor Pulling Association, Inked Entertainment, Swyear Amusements, Archway Amusement, A Fantasy Amusement Co., Burnham & Flowers Insurance Group, DRS Skinner Amusements, Prairie Farms Dairy, Regalia Mfg Co., and Bobby Braun/Braun Events.

From the Showcase to the Talent Show to the trade show and queen coronation, it was a weekend to remember – fun, education and renewal of friendships. Our convention theme, Innovations and Traditions, embodied the idea of looking to the future while still embracing the past and is true for your fairs this summer.

Keynote speaker Mark Mayfield reminded us to “Tell me something good” each day of our lives. He shared how finding the good in everything can make a positive difference in our fairs and our world. His upbringing helped shape the man he is today and the success he’s had as a speaker and businessman.

Mark challenged us to manage change to create change. His seven steps including adopting a questioning attitude, go into action, experi-



Newly selected Miss Illinois County Fair Alexi Bladel of Rockford poses for a quick photo during inthe IAAF Convention with Illinois Director of Agriculture John Sullivan of xxxxx.

ence new things, play mental games, hang out with creative people, experience diversity and to lighten up. Those work in our own lives and for our fairs.

“The trail is the thing – not the end of the trail,” he said “Remember this life –and our fairs – are supposed to be fun.”

Alexi Bladel of Rockford was crowned the 60th Miss Illinois county Fair Queen by Illinois Director of Agriculture John Sullivan and Illinois County Fair Association Vice President Ken Tyrrell. She represented Winnebago County. Bladel,

19, is currently attending Rock Valley College to obtain an Associate Degree in Fire Science and become a firefighter.

“This was a dream come true,” said Bladel after being crowned. “My mom was a queen in Vermillion County and competed at state and I’ve always wanted to do this. I hope to be an ambassador and promote agriculture.”

Bladel grew up on a small family farm in Vermillion County before the family moved to Rockford. Her grandfather was fire chief, and she
(Continued on Page ?)

The President's Pen

All over Illinois, farmers are ready to get in the fields and it's beginning to finally feel like spring. Soon it will be time for county fairs to open their gates for the season.

I would like to thank everyone for attending our recent Convention and Queen contest and thank those who filled in for me while I was sick. I'm looking forward to 2019 to be a better year and seeing everyone this summer at their fairs.

I hope you all have your County Fair schedules booked and are making plans for a successful fair.

Thanks to the Board of Directors for helping make the State Convention an enormous success. Our tradeshow was expanded and sold out, and we hope we continue to enjoy growth from networking with our vendors and county fair members.

Our Queen pageant had 71 contestants and was a wonderful evening for the finals. The Talent Show had fewer entries but the quality of those participating was great. Showcasing was Friday night with slushies, wine and ice cream and great bands to listen to and book for your fair. I hope everyone went



James Walsh

home with ideas "Innovations and Traditions" at their fairs this summer.

Thanks to Margaret Vaughn, IAAF Advocate and her team of volunteers who helped get our

additional monies released. It was because of your generous support through the IAAF legislative fund that we were able to remind the representatives and senators of the impact that County Fairs make on our economy.

I hope this summer to visit many of your fairs. Wishing you all a wonderful County Fair season.

President

Queen Alexi: We Can Make History

History makers! We each have the capability to make history, but it is up to us to forge the path!

I am a history maker. As the the 60th Miss Winnebago Co Fair Queen, the 60th Miss Illinois County Fair Queen, and now the 1st ever Miss Winnebago Co to be crowned Miss Illinois Co Fair Queen, I am making history. I am currently an intern with the Win-bur-sew Fire Department and am also studying Fire Science at Rock Valley College.

I lived on a small farm in Vermillion County until I was 14. In 2013, my family and I moved to Rockford.. The last 4 years I have had chance to work

on a dairy farm in Poplar Grove. I also have been involved with the Manchester Mavericks 4-H at the Boone Co. Fair.

When I was crowned Miss Winnebago in August of last year, I made it my main goal to increase agricultural awareness in my county. Over the last 6 months, I have been invited to share Ag In the Classroom with several area public and private schools and at Lockwood Park Children's Farm. Seeing a child's eyes light up at the idea of learning farming concepts has been one of the highlights of being a fair queen.

Agriculture is making history, even as I stand here in front of you.

Dates to Remember

- **County Fair Day, IL State Fair**
August 9, 2019
- **Talent Entries Due:**
October 1, 2019
- **Central Zone Mtg. Springfield**
October 27, 2019
- **Northern Zone Mtg. Ottawa**
November 3, 2019
- **Southern Zone Mtg. Marion**
November 10, 2019
- **IAFE Convention, Sand Antonio**
November 30-December 4, 2019
- **IAAF Convention, Springfield**
January 17-21, 2020

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The 2019 Friend of Illinois County Fair winners were honored at Saturday's breakfast and introduced to the crowd. The winners pictured above, from left to right, are Liz Hutchison, Gale Cunningham, Karen Sorrill, Kris Lowe and Butch Peters.

Five Are Friends of Illinois County Fairs

Five long-time fair volunteers received the "Friend of Illinois County Fair" award at this year's 109th annual convention of the Illinois Association of Agricultural Fairs.

The Friend of Illinois County Fair award was awarded to **Gale Cunningham**, farm director of WYXY radio station, Elizabeth (Liz) Hutchinson of the Carroll County Fair in Milledgeville, Kris Lowe of the Clinton County Fair in Clinton, Karen Sorrill of the Adams County Fair in Mendon and Butch Peters of the Boone County Fair.

Cunningham, farm director of WYXY has been the farmers' friend and advocate for agriculture for over 50 years. Gale covers many county fairs each summer and interviews a wide range of youth highlighting their 4-H, FFA or Junior show activities.

He is a champion at promoting their accomplishments and encour-

aging their future contributions to agriculture.

Liz Hutchinson is known for her leadership of the Carroll County Fair. She joined 4-H to be able to groom and show her calf, then she joined the fair's office staff as assistant treasurer in 1994. She became treasurer in 2003 and became president in 2011. Now her two daughters are involved as well as their families.

As president, Liz has seen the devastation of two major commercial buildings and damage to a third, due to forces of nature. She immediately went to work rebuilding.

Kris Lowe has been a fair board member of the Clinton County Fair for the past 10 years and served as secretary the past 5 years. She is responsible for compiling and the printing of the premium book, selling fair ads, filling out state reports and numerous other jobs. She is a very dedicated volunteer.

Karen Sorrill has been an integral part of the Adams County Fair for the past 50 years. She is willing to step in to help with any tasks around the fairgrounds, diligently works on mapping out the displays throughout the fairgrounds and assists with payments and distribution of passes, among other things. Karen always has a smile on her face and a fun-loving personality.

Also receiving the award was **Butch Peters** of Boone County. Butch has been a member of the fair board for the past 11 years. He has served as assistant Swine Superintendent since 2001 and has been one of the Livestock Superintendents overall since 2011. Butch has been instrumental in getting a new wash rack installed in the Swine Barn. He's ready to help with painting, welding, washing and making decisions. The Boone County Fair is a better place because of all the things Butch does for it.

186 Attend Zone 5 Meeting in Lincoln

by Jill Hardesty, IAAF Central Zone Director

The IAFE Zone 5 conference was held in Lincoln, Nebraska March 15th-17th.

The theme for the conference was "Fairs and Festivals: Honestly, they're for everyone!" 186 people attended the conference from 5 states. Illinois' representation included 6 people; Charlie & Julie Kennell, Heart of Illinois fair, Peoria, Jim & Wanda Bohnert, Rock Island County Fair and Rick and Jill Hardesty, Fisher Fair.

There were 20 break-out sessions with topics from Animal Health, Recycling, Gate & Partner Discounts and Insurance, Young Professionals meetings were held, along with tours of a Quilt Museum and the Pinnacle Bank Arena in Lincoln. The conference was held over the St. Patrick's weekend, so plenty of singing and entertainment was offered that also included Irish River Dancers, bands and bagpipes!

Driving to the conference was very discouraging and humbling to see all the devastation that river flooding can cause with low-lying ground to farms, homes and fairgrounds. There were several attendees that had their fairgrounds completely leveled and just "gone" from the floods. Many roads and bridges have been washed away along with livestock along the way. IAFE CEO Marla Calico offered our sympathies, condolences and prayers as she addressed the attendees at the meeting.

The 2020 Zone 5 Conference will be held in Des Moines, IA February 28-March 1, 2020 at the new Marriott Hotel, downtown Des Moines. We hope that will be able to attend! Iowa always puts on a great conference and you will not be disappointed!



This year's group from Illinois attending the Zone 5 meeting was small but enthusiastic!



Premium Vouchers at Comptroller's

by Mike Foster

Chief, Bureau of County Fairs

Hello to everyone. It's spring time—finally. Everyone is getting ready for the fair time that is right around the corner. I hope everyone is as excited as I am.

First thing I need to cover is Premium money. By the time you all get a chance to read Tent Talk, the premium voucher will be at the comptroller's office. I am hoping that they will release it in a short amount of time. If anyone needs to know what they are going to be receiving, just give me a call.

The Recapitulation report will have been sent off for printing and CDs being made. With these two items, they are late in being sent out. I am the one to be held accountable for the error. Again, I would like to say I'm sorry for the delay.

Now that we are all getting ready for the new fair season, here are a couple things to remember. Fair books and Entry Fee Certificate need to be mailed to the Department 10 days prior to the start of your fair. Rehabilitations Reports are due on or before June 30. If you are participating in the track improvement program this year, all receipts need to be filed with the Department on or before May 1, 2019.

The bureau is glad to have a new employee join the crew, Carrie Tiskos. Carrie will be working with the Standardbred Program.

County Fairs will be having some changes with the Administrative Codes. The new codes will deal with reports and when they are due. If any reports are filed after December 31 of each year, premium money will be withheld from the fair. This will help in the Department being able to pay

premiums on a timelier manner and get the Recapitulation report printed.

If there is anything anyone needs, just reach out to me, and I'll be glad to help. Good luck with your fairs this year and I look forward to seeing you.

Need a Kids' Handout

The ever popular Color the Fair coloring books and Read and Win ribbons are available for purchase from the IAFE. The 8-page coloring book has a color cover, two activity pages and 1/3 page space on the back cover for fairs to print sponsor or fair messages. The books are available for \$10 per 100 copies and make excellent prizes, coloring contest materials or promotional items.

For more information on IAFE promotional products, go to <http://bit.ly/IAFEProducts>.



Junior Talent Show winner Leah Hoffman of Morgan County. Hoffman won with a dance solo.



Senior Talent Show winner Madalyn Schmitt is presented with her talent show winning plaque by 2018 Queen Samantha Hasselbring.

Tell Junior, Senior Talent Show Winners

One of the highlights of the 109th annual convention is the Talent Show competition. Winners of this year's competition include:

Earlier at the IAAF annual convention, Talent Show winners were chosen. Winner in the senior division went to Madalyn Schmitt of Ford County with a vocal solo; second place went to Alexis Krones with a dance solo; third place went to Enrica Uhlen of DuPage County with a vocal solo; fourth place went to Ryleigh Turner of Jersey County with a Classical Point Dance solo and fifth place went to Elaine Hibbert of Georgetown Fair.

In the Junior Division Talent Show, Leah Hoffman of Morgan County was the winner with a dance solo; second place went to the Jazz Dance group from the Richland County fair; third place went to a Jazz Dance group at the Scott County Fair; fourth place went to Zoe Dodd of Marion County with a vocal solo and fifth place went to Katharine Kostner of DuPage County with a Ukulele solo.

Forms for the 2020 Queen Pageant and Talent Competition are

posted on the IAAF website: www.illinoiscountyfairs.org under the Convention tab. Entries must be submitted by October 1st. Please share this information with your fair's Talent Chair. Entries are due

Oct. 1, 2019.

The Miss Illinois County Fair Queen Pageant entry information and applications form may be found at www.missillinoiscountyfair.com. Entries are due Oct. 1, 2019.

Steven Launius honored at SIU

Clinton County Fair board member Steve Launius was recently recognized at the 67th All Ag Banquet hosted by SIU Carbondale. This article ran in the Carbondale paper.

In keeping with their long-time tradition, the College of Agricultural Sciences at Southern Illinois University Carbondale recently recognized alumni, students and faculty members for their service to the college and the community.

More than 200 students and 150 alumni, donors, legislators and community members attended the 67th annual "All Ag Banquet" on Feb. 22. The evening began with remarks by Chancellor John M. Dunn and Dean Karen Midden, and followed with awards given in honor of several unique achievements. Illinois state

Reps. Terri Bryant, R-Murphysboro and Dave Severin, R-Benton, and state Sen. Paul Schimpf, R-Waterloo, joined the festivities to honor the remarkable achievements from those within the college.

Three-degree alumnus Steven Launius received the college's Lifetime Achievement Award, which recognizes an alum who graduated more than 21 years ago.

Launius earned his bachelor's degree in agricultural education, master's degree in agribusiness economics and doctorate in educational administration. Launius worked as an ag teacher for eight years and served as superintendent of several schools. Over the past 27 years, he has served as a judge for many FFA and agricultural-related activities.

Vaughn: Extremely Busy Legislature

IAAF LEGISLATIVE RECEPTION

Thanks to everyone that made the trip to Springfield for IAAF Legislative Reception held in conjunction with AG Day, March 19, at Saputo's with a Country Western theme.

Special thanks to Bill and Mary Johnson with Fantasy Amusements, Jeff Blomsness with North American Midway Amusements and Pat Skinner with Skinner's Amusements for their generous financial support of the event.

SB 154 – TRAVELING ANIMAL EXHIBIT BAN

It was an extremely busy session, as IAAF lead the fight against legislation to ban traveling animal exhibits.

There was SB 154 in the Senate sponsored by Sen. Linda Holmes (D-Aurora), Laura Fine (D-Glenview), Cristina Castro (D-Elgin), Suzy Glowiak (D-Elmhurst), Julie Morrison (D-Deerfield), Sue Rezin (R-Morris), Laura Ellman (D-Wheaton) and Laura Murphy (D-DesPlaines) which focused on 15 different kinds of species including tigers, bears, kangaroos, non-human primates and HB 2554 sponsored by Rep. Camille Lily (D-Oak Park), which applied to any animal not native in origin to the United States.

It was an uphill battle, but IAAF fought hard and thankfully IFB joined us in our opposition. Special thanks to the nearly 800 people who signed in as opponents.

I found Alan Blumhurst, who owns a traveling petting zoo (Rainbow Ranch) out of Nashville, Illinois to advocate with us and joined me in individual meetings with the all the members of the Senate Ag Committee ahead of time and also provided testimony before the Senate Ag Committee the day of the hearing.

Special thanks to Jim McGuire of the DuPage County Fair who also came to testify. SB 154 fell one vote short of passage in the Senate Ag Committee but proponents plan to reintroduce the bill next year.

It turned out it was crafted by the big zoos and out of state habitats, who want to create a monopoly and put



Sen. Patricia Van Pelt Receives IAAF Award

During AG Day, members of the IAAF Board presented Sen. Patricia Van Pelt (D-Chicago), which an award in appreciation for her advocacy of county fairs as a member of the Senate Agriculture Committee. Pictured 1st row seated, Ken Tyrell, Sen. Van Pelt, Bill Jennings, second row standing Cindy Mielke, Charlotte Tyrell, Sandy Hoke, Gary Mielke, and Margaret Vaughn.

small family owned traveling animal exhibitors out of business in order to cut off the revenue stream to care for their animals so they will be forced to donate them to zoos or out of state habitats, like Big Cat Habitat out of Florida (which had 70 proponents and charge as much as \$150 admission)!

Fortunately after we met with Rep. Camille Lily and she gained a better understanding of the horrific impact her bill would have on the agricultural community and she tabled the measure.

IAAF WORKING ON LATE AG REPORT SUBMISSIONS

IAAF is working with the Illinois Dept of Ag to address the issue of premium fairs submitting their reports several months late and delaying the rest of the fairs from receiving their payments.

The Dept of Ag is proposing to amend their administrative rule so that fairs will not be able to receive any premium payments for if they submit their grand summary report later than December 31st.

You Can Attend IAFE Convention for Free

The IAFE Convention is the premier event for fair industry networking, education and business. There are multiple ways for you to attend the Convention with a travel stipend and /or a free registration.

If your fair has attendance under 100,000 people and no member affiliated with the member fair has attended the IAFE convention since 2008, your fair is eligible for one free Convention registration.

If you are under the age of 40 and

have never attended the IAFE Convention or have not been in three or more years, you may be eligible for a travel stipend and a complimentary Convention registration.

If your fair has an attendance under 25,000, you are eligible to apply for the Rhonda Livingstone "Dream Big" Memorial Scholarship, which is \$1,000 to be used toward IAFE educational opportunities including the Convention.

You can get all the details on these opportunities at

New Illinois, Du Quoin Fair Managers

Acting Director of Agriculture John Sullivan announced April 3 the hiring of Kevin Gordon and Josh Gross to lead the Illinois State Fair and Du Quoin State Fair, respectively.

Kevin Gordon is returning to the Department of Agriculture to lead the 2019 Illinois State Fair. He brings with him previous experience leading the State Fair that will be invaluable to the Department.

"I'm very appreciative of Director Sullivan and Governor Pritzker for this opportunity. I'm excited to come back and work with the Department and the phenomenal state fair staff," says Gordon. "The Illinois State Fairgrounds is a special place and I look forward to getting back and seeing what 2019 holds."

"Kevin brings a wealth of knowledge, experience and a genuine appreciation for the Illinois State Fair. Through years of hard work, he has earned the respect of co-workers, exhibitors, vendors and the fair community," says Sullivan. "I'm proud to have Kevin Gordon lead the Illinois State Fair."

Josh Gross of Du Quoin has been tapped to lead the Du Quoin State Fair. Josh currently serves as the Perry County Clerk with previous experience as a store manager and financial advisor.

"I would like to thank the people of Perry County for electing me twice to serve as their County Clerk," says Gross. "I look forward to continuing to serve the community and surrounding region in this role and showcasing what the Du Quoin State Fairgrounds has to offer."

"The experience that Josh brings from both the public and private sectors is a welcome addition to the Du Quoin State Fair," says Sullivan. "His personal connection, love for the region, and fresh energy will revitalize a treasure for the community and an economic engine for the entire area. I'm excited to have him leading the Du Quoin State Fair."

Governor Pritzker underscored his commitment to and appreciation for the Illinois and Du Quoin State Fairs.

"We're excited to welcome Kevin Gordon back to the Illinois State Fair and to have Josh Gross continue his public service at the Du Quoin State Fair," said Gov. JB Pritzker. "Their leadership will be crucial to planning and executing our state's most treasured events. Illinoisans and visitors from around the region will soon enjoy the fruits of their labor at the fairgrounds."



Meet with Rep. Bailey

Several Effingham County Fair Board members joined Rep. Darren Bailey at the IAAF Legislative reception. Picture in front are Marcia Craig, Rep. Darren Bailey, and Margaret Vaughn, IAAF lobbyist.

—Alexi Bladel Is Queen of Fairs

(Continued from Page 1) hopes to follow in his steps. She graduated high school at age 17 and attended beauty school, then enrolled in college to be a firefighter and apply when she turns 21.

Bladel will be a summer employee of the Department of Agriculture. She will travel to about 30 county fair and will be the official hostess of the Illinois State Fair in Springfield and the DuQuoin State Fair in DuQuoin. As queen, Bladel's main duty is to emphasize the importance of agriculture and county fairs to Illinois.

Please contact her or Cathy Redshaw for any special events at your fair this summer.

The top 15 finalists were: Chloe Leonard of Sangamon County; Grace Mongan of Ogle County, Savanna Long of Morgan County, Addison Osman of Union County,

Madison Baillard of Warren County, Alexi Bladel of Winnebago, Mia Brandenburg of Farmer City/DeWitt County, Olivia Telgmann of Shelby County, Anni Iberson of Macoupin County, Jamie Franck of Henry County, Olivia Lorenzo of McHenry County, Alexis Carlock of Cass County, Lyndsey Neukomm of Iroquois County, Teaghan Callaway of Lake County and Billi Jo Shank of Georgetown in Vermillion County.

Non-finalist awards went to: Taylor Stocks of Jersey, Ruby Crum Memorial Award; Baylie Devall of Marion, Best personal interview; Taylor Stocks of Jersey, Best in Communication Skills; Samantha Trout of Richland, Best in Stage Presence; Kierstyn Allen of Edgar, Best in Beauty and Physique competition. Mary Marley of Lawrence County was the People's Choice Award Winner.

IN MEMORIAM

John Mumma, 67, of Philo passed away Feb. 13, 2019 in Seymour, Ind.

John was born Oct. 30, 1951, in Champaign. He married Brenda Dallas on Jan. 17, 1976, in Tuscola. She survives as well as three daughters.

He was a lifelong farmer in the Philo and Sidney area. He worked with the Philo Fire Department, was a Philo village trustee, president of the Philo Park Board and Bill Huss Chapel Cemetery, on the Locust Grove Cemetery board and a member of the Unity Alumni Athletic Association (UAAA).

He was also on the Illinois Tractor Pulling Association Board before becoming vice president. He was also a flagman and a tech official for the ITPA. He served on the U.S. Association of Pullers Board. He became a competing member of the ITPA and USAP in 2009. He was a two-time Pro Pulling League

Champion and multitime ITPA Champion.

William (Bill) David Haag, 69, of Sandwich, IL, passed away on January 6, 2019. He was born on May 12, 1949 in Sandwich Illinois to Robert and Ruth (Behrmann) Haag.

He was a graduate of Sandwich High School, graduating in 1967. He worked at Allsteel for 27 years and

Walmart for 23 years, retiring from Walmart. He was a member of the Sandwich VFW and the American Legion. He served in the US Army, from March 1969-1971, in the Viet Nam War.

He was a Sandwich Fair board member since 1989. He enjoyed woodworking, camping, fishing, and spending time with his grandchildren.

Address Updates Are Needed

The IAAF office is in the process of updating the TentTalk mailing list.

If you have received this issue and no longer wish to receive future issues, please let us know. If you are responsible for your fair directors' listings, please forward any new address changes, and new board members or current directors who do not currently receive the issues of TentTalk.

The way the list is maintained

makes it difficult to know who should be deleted. Therefore, please forward any names that should be, or should have been, removed over the past several years.

We will check and if they still are on the list, they will be removed.

Please send all updates to:
IAAFOffice@illinoiscountyfairs.org
or to IAAF Office, 24510 E 1000 N Rd., Fairbury, IL 61739.



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