



Illinois
Association
of
Agricultural
Fairs

May 2021

TentTalk

County Fairs Are Ready for Crowds and Fun

We have survived Covid and thankfully most of the country, including Illinois, is moving forward.

Most of our 104 fairs are planning to be up and in full County Fair mode to welcome fairgoers this summer after a year's hiatus caused by the coronavirus pandemic.

Illinois Gov. J. B. Pritzker announced recently the Illinois State Fair and DuQuoin State Fair would be back in business as well.

Barring a "highly unusual event," Pritzker says that he anticipates that the annual State Fairs in Springfield and Du Quoin will be able to proceed later this summer.

The governor said that the size of outdoor spaces at both sites will be key to allowing the fairs to take place, and that the Illinois Department of Public Health is coordinating with the state's Department of Agriculture to ensure the safety of fairgoers.

"I am very much looking forward to the Illinois State Fair," Pritzker said. "We've obviously been doing all the planning that's necessary for it. Barring some highly unusual event that would prevent a large gathering....I think we're gonna have a lot of fun this summer."

Several other fairs are being asked to work with local health departments to give Covid vaccinations during county fairs, according to IDOA Chief of Staff Jeremy Flynn.

Gunner Sullivan, president of the Fairbury Fair in Livingston County, scheduled for Aug. 18-22, can't wait to open fair gates this summer.

"We feel like as long as the health department allows us to open our gates, we will have a fair, and we're not expecting to have any issues," said Sullivan. "We run (car) races



Perhaps nothing says "fair" better than the ubiquitous Ferris Wheel.

every Saturday night and have good crowds. We've never had any Covid cases traced back to that, so the lady at the health department gave her blessing to go ahead with the fair."

The key this year is working with your local health department – and having wide, open spaces.

"After she gave her OK to having the fair, I sent her a bouquet of flowers," said Sullivan.

The carnival is also a "go".

"We have Luehr's coming, and they're already open in southern Illinois," Sullivan added. "So far, everything is going, including our entertainment. We plan to have a major country act on August 18.

We're do excited."

So far, the single major Illinois fair not opening this summer is the DuPage County Fair because the fairgrounds are being used as a site for vaccinations.

"We are currently hosting the DuPage County vaccination site, and don't know when this will end," said Jim McGuire, executive manager of the DuPage County Fair Association. "The reality is that it may still be in place during our fair dates (July 21-25). Also, the uncertainty of where we will be with protocols at that time influenced our decision. We are honored to support the good

The President's Pen

Greeting from the north prairie. Although we are extremely dry, field work and planting have resumed. Many farmers in our area had been waiting for warmer weather. A little over a week ago, we suffered temperatures in the 20-30-40-degree range.

The Small Business Administration which had Shuttered Venue Operators Grants (SVOG) reopened applications on April 26. A 57-page users guide is available to help with the application process. \$16.25 billion has been earmarked for shuttered venues.

Fairs should be aware by now that the junior class age limit has been raised to 21 years of age. Please read the email that has been sent to the fair contact. Additionally, the 72-hour rule is still in effect. Also, the notarization of fair reports is being discussed by the legal department and the Department of Agriculture. So, stay tuned.

On a sad note, Elizabeth McDevitt passed away this spring. Elizabeth dedicated her life to the fair industry and continued to contribute at our Springfield convention after she retired. The registration desk will not be the same and Elizabeth will be missed by all. Our heartfelt condolence goes out to her family. Please take a moment to remember our lost fair member.

Fair members, officials and the public who support fairs are the



Ken Tyrrell

most giving people on earth.

A Texas state trooper, Chad Walker, recently lost his life while performing his duty. Walker's daughter was to sell her rabbits at the county fair the next day.

Generous bidders pushed the sale price to \$7,000 for the rabbits. In Texas there is a policy called Add-Ons. The community stepped up contributing Add-Ons until the fund had reached \$100,000.

While the funds will never replace her father, these funds will certainly help in her future. A big thank you goes to the generous folks in Texas.

In closing, IAAF and the fair industry is moving forward. Most have a positive attitude and faith in our industry. We wish success to all of our member fairs and concessionaires.

Kenneth D. Tyrrell
President

—County Fairs Are Returning

(Continued from Page 1)
works of our county health department and feel their success will support all future events."

We certainly will miss seeing fairgoers and long-term partners at all the traditional shows hosted at the fairgrounds, McGuire said. "We have been working with our partners to resent our regular calendar of events.

McGuire said plans are underway

for a 4-H Fair to be held on the fairgrounds in July. Participating 4-H members can earn a spot to participate in the state competition at the Illinois State Fair, scheduled Aug. 12-22, 2021 in Springfield.

"We wish everyone the best as they move forward with their events," added McGuire. "Just can't wait until we can put this all behind us."

Dates to Remember

• **Fair books and Entry Fee Certificate** due to IDOA 10 days before fair's start; Rehabilitation Reports due to IDOA by June 30, 2021

• **Illinois State Fair**
August 13-22, 2021

• **County Fair Day** August 13, 2021

• **Grand Summary Report**
due by October 15, 2021

Zone Meetings:

- Central Zone, Oct. 31, 2021
- Northern Zone, Nov. 7, 2021
- Southern Zone, Nov. 14, 2021

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Kelsi Kessler Addresses Illinois Legislators

Good morning. I'm Kelsi Kessler. I'm so grateful to take part in the 51st Annual Agricultural Legislative Day as the two thousand-twenty / twenty-one Miss Illinois County Fair.

I am honored and humbled by this role as it presents me with the opportunity to not only to act as the hostess for both state fairs in Illinois, but it also gives me a platform to serve as an advocate for agriculture and ag-education initiatives.

Regardless of the region of Illinois you represent, agriculture profoundly impacts your constituents making this day not just relevant to those of you from the rural Illinois communities where crop and livestock production shape the local economies, but also those of you from the urban areas of Illinois where economic landscapes are strengthened by agriculture processing and manufacturing.

The various agriculture-affiliated organizations represented here today will provide us all with better understanding of the scientific and technological advancements that are "yielding" progress as well as the economic and environmental challenges that could potentially adversely affect "growth" for our farmers, and ultimately, our state.

Before you explore these facets of agriculture, an industry that generates billions of dollars in revenue annually here in the Land of Lincoln, I'd like to provide you with a better understanding of the shared values of those who are the heart of agriculture-the farmers. We all know that a strong work ethic is a value that all farmers have in common-but I want to share with you three values that might not be as top of mind-their love of the land, their faith in the lord, and their trust in our legislators-all of which are important values for the future of our young people.

The love of the land that Illinois farmers share has been passed down through the generations. Farmers

rely on the land for their livelihood, and like their grandfathers and great-grandfathers, their reliance on the land leads them to becoming our most devoted stewards of the soil. Evolving costly measures including erosion prevention initiatives like building structures and installing tile, soil nourishment efforts like applying fertilizers and planting cover crops, and tillage processes that keep the land suitable for growth allow farmers to give back to the land that provides for not only their own families but for all of us.

Their second shared value, their faith in the Lord, is what many farmers would argue is the most critical. Without faith in God, farming would merely feel like a gamble. But knowing that God provides the proper balance of sunshine and rain that their crops and livestock need, farmers display a level of faith that most of us will never exhibit. While in some years, that balance of sunshine and rain is not optimal, through their faith in God, they remain thankful and have hope that the next year will be better than the current one. Our farmers remind us all to be patient-God will provide.

Lastly, farmers' shared value of trust in our legislators is the one that is of utmost relevance today. Daily impacted deeply from laws pertaining to our environment, our economy, and the state's infrastructure, farmers are keenly aware that their voices are and must continue to be heard. Decisions that all of you make affect our farmers every day, and the farmers trust that through state-wide consumer awareness ini-



Kelsi Kessler, 2020 - 2021 Miss Illinois County Fair

tiatives in places like our schools, 4-H clubs and other community organizations, and state and county fairs, through efforts of the Illinois Farm Bureau, an organization that my grandfather proudly served for 50 years, and of course, through their own votes, they can help to ensure that legislators will make decisions that will continue to advance agriculture here in the Land of Lincoln.

As we virtually gather together on the 51st Agricultural Legislative Day, I want to thank you for allowing me to speak to you on the values of those whose efforts we all value. Because of Illinois farmers' love of land, their faith in the Lord, and their trust in you, our legislators, our young people can learn a great deal about science, values, and our government, making ag-centered programming like Ag in the Classroom, FFA, and 4-H vital for the future of Illinois.

On behalf of the Illinois Association of Agricultural Fairs, thank you for allowing me to join today as we honor agriculture in the

Lots to Look Forward to This Summer



Update on Illinois Legislature Activity

by **Bridget Dougherty**

IAAF Legislative Consultant

Hello IAAF Members and Fair Leaders! There are only a few weeks remaining until the Illinois General Assembly's May 31, 2021 adjournment date.

Both the House and the Senate recently resumed meeting in-person in the Capitol with strict coronavirus safety measures in place, including weekly required testing and mandatory face coverings. With the positivity rate of COVID-19 declining statewide and increased immunizations, we are looking forward to a successful fair season!

The 51st Annual Ag Legislative Day to celebrate Illinois largest industry was held virtually on April 21. Governor J.B. Pritzker acknowledged that this year has been challenging for the agriculture community, and noted that at the beginning of the pandemic he recognized and supported agriculture by declaring the entire industry and agricultural workers as essential, allowing agricultural products to move throughout the state and the country. The Governor said that he was looking forward with optimism to holding safe and successful fairs this year.

We want to provide a brief update on legislation and programs being considered this spring.

Resolutions Honoring the Life of Marvin Perzee and Importance of County Fairs: House Resolution 66, sponsored by Representative Thomas Bennett, Republican of Pontiac, and Senate Resolution 85, sponsored by Senator Jason Barickman, Republican of Bloomington, were filed honoring the life of Marvin Perzee and making May 20, 2021 "Marvin Perzee County Fair Day" in Illinois. As you know, these Resolutions unfortunately were not heard last year due to the suspension of the Session. The Resolutions have been refiled and we have slipped the Association's support in committee. We hope to be able to have Fair Leaders in Springfield on May 20

when the Resolutions will be adopted on the House and Senate Floors. In addition, this year Representative Chris Miller, Republican of Robinson, Illinois filed House Resolution 70, which recognizes the importance of county fairs. We've indicated IAAF's support on that measure as well.

Department of Agriculture Rule Changes Affecting County Fairs: IAAF supported the Department's proposed changes to the administrative rules governing the operation of Agricultural Fairs and worked with the Department on their passage. The changes pertaining to the eligible age of participants in Junior Classes and the requirements for timely submission of Rehabilitation Reports were effective on April 2, 2021.

Criminalization of Traveling Animal Acts: Three House bills were filed this year that are substantially similar to the measure we defeated last year in the Senate. The bills would prohibit the use of certain animals in a traveling animal act

and negatively impact agricultural fairs. IAAF was again successful in keeping these bills in committee. Thanks to all who responded to our "Call to Action" to oppose these bills. We will continue to watch for amendments that could contain this language for the remainder of the Session, and will reach out to Fair Leaders for assistance if these measures reappear between now and May 31.

Business Interruption Grants (BIG) Program: As you know, we urged all IAAF members to apply for Business Interruption Grants before the program closed on December 31, 2020. We are pleased to report that IAAF members received a combined total of about \$525,000. in grant funding. Congratulations to the successful grantees! Legislators from both parties are urging that this program be re-opened using forthcoming federal relief funds and we will advise you immediately if the program is reopened.

Wishing everyone a happy and

Talent Contest Changes for 2022

by **Dave Engelbrecht,**
Talent Show Director

The Talent Contest will have some changes at the annual convention held in January 2022.

We are encouraging all people wanting to watch the Talent Contest register and pay in advance. The fee for guests will still be \$15.00. Participants are automatically registered with payment from their counties.

Our registration desk has struggled to accommodate the mass influx of people wanting to watch the contest and get everyone the information they need on time.

Any registration for the Talent Contest will be moved to the entrance of the contest room. Every attempt will be made to have the registered participants and guest badges prepackaged by county or individual.

Also we will have two stages in the room and we will have one stage set up with a piano for accompaniment and the piano will remain stationary for the entire show. This will keep the contests moving smoothly.

As always I will need several volunteers to assist at the registration tables especially with a new location. Enjoy your County fair Talent

Address Changes

Tent Talk has a continuing need for correct addresses as more and more of you switch from rural routes to "911 addresses".

Also, there are some phone numbers that have a new area code that we won't know about unless you tell us.

Board secretaries can help us by checking to make sure all board members are on the mailing list.

You Won't Want to Miss These Events

Whether it's county fairs or county fair day or our annual convention, when things get taken away, we tend to value you them more.

Please make plans to attend these events so we can catch up and learn from each other.

Make plans to attend County Fair Day at the Illinois State Fair on Friday, Aug. 13.

All our queens will be there as well as county fair friends.

The Illinois Department of Agriculture will announce the County Fair Person of the year. If you have someone associated with your fair that you think is worthy, please send a nomination to Tim Norman with the Illinois Department of Agriculture.



Marla Calico

Plans are underway for the IAAF Annual Convention. Mark your calendars for Jan. 14-16, 2022 at the Crowne Plaza in Springfield.

Keynote speaker is Marla Calico, president and CEO of the IAFE.

Marla has been a steady voice during the Covid pandemic and helped fairs and associates navigate these troubled waters. She will share with us lessons from the past and a guide for the future. In addition, the Talent Contest, Showcase and trade show will be back. A highlight will be seeing county fair friends and the selection of Miss Illinois County Fair queen. Elections will be held for IAAF slate of officers as well.

IDOA: Must Submit Waiver Requests

Greetings from the IDOA and Happy Spring!

As we rapidly approach the 2021 County Fair season there are many questions as to what the fairs will look like this year. While no one knows, it would be prudent for each fair to be in contact with your Counties Health Department for guidance on the current guidelines.

A couple of subjects that have been reoccurring in conversations, have been the 72 Hour Rule and Exhibitor premium payments. Many fairs have been looking into an IDOA waiver for the 72 Hour Rule as a preemptive move if livestock shows become "show and go" scenarios. We understand that position, but we need to make sure every fair is aware that the waiver requests must be submitted to the IDOA by each fair in writing per the Administrative Rules. We cannot issue a "blanket" waiver to this Rule. Please see; Section 260.50 Exhibits and Livestock; Presence on the Fairgrounds and Early Release Procedure in the Administrative Rules section of the Recapitulation Report for the full content.

Also there have been some questions on presenting Premium Money, with the exhibitor's signature upon receipt, at the conclusion each event and the gathering that it might create. Once again, the concern is to eliminate crowd density preemptively yet still be able to distribute the Premium payments to the exhibitors. You can mail the premium checks to the exhibitors with the person mailing the checks signing the exhibitor's name. These transactions must be recorded in the Premium Grand Summary Report with copies of the transaction. Please see; Section 260.30 Premiums and Receipts for Premiums Paid in the Administrative Rules section of the Recapitulation report for the full content.

Finally the Administration Rule concerning the age limit has been approved and it is effective for this years fairs, it is copied below.

Section 260.95 Junior Classes
a) Junior classes are eligible for premium State aid only if they are open to boys and girls who are 8 years of age or in third grade and not yet 21 years of age on or

before September 1 of the year previous to the fair.

We would also like to make you aware that effective March 31, 2021 Mike Foster has retired from the IDOA. We wish Mike a Happy Retirement! While we are working to fill Mike's position, if you need anything please feel contact me at timothy.norman@illinois.gov or at 217-785-0110.

Fair Quotations

"There's something that feels so all-American about a county fair."

"If she wants to go to the county fair instead of a fancy restaurant, put a ring on it."

Life is like a Ferris wheel... sometimes you're up, sometimes you're down. On the end, you just have to learn how to enjoy the ride – Rubyanne

Life is a carnival. You wait in long lines to enjoy a short ride but it's that moment that makes you feel ALIVE.

Hit the Brakes or Full Steam Ahead?

**By: Jill Hardesty, Fisher Fair,
Fisher, IL
IAAF State Vice-President**

Here we are in 2021 and some of the same questions still exist from the 2020 Pandemic that all but closed every fair & festival down.

It was such a hard year for everyone and one that I question and think, "Will it ever be the same"? I highly doubt it. Maybe that's a good thing and maybe not.

The economic impact, as we all know is HUGE in this state and not only many fairs were affected, but many counties, cities and households were also affected by revenues that Illinois county fairs would have brought in to their communities.

Some of the same thoughts exist:

- Do we cut back or go BIG?
- What about insurance and the uptick of its cost?
- Carnival issues coming out of a pandemic, are they on board with your vision?

Don't be afraid to have those conversations. Being informed and making decisions is the only way to take your fair into 2021 and beyond.

Will county fairs ever be "like it used to be" or "the way it's always been done"? The answer is yet to be determined. However, what I know is we'll all think differently from now on in all of our lifetimes on how we present ourselves to our guests and our public.

In my lifetime, so far, I would have never thought that I would be having discussions about masks, social distancing and adding more handwash stations or sanitizer stations to our livestock barns and throughout the grounds.

These suggestions below are just some of the information that we shared and collected last year about this time on IAAF calls, whether to have a fair in 2020 or not.

In 2021, we sort of think the same thing, but I'm more hopeful this year on what is coming this summer. Masking during the summer is not

going to be fun but it's the necessity that we need to do to keep everyone safe.

I hope that you have also considered getting vaccinated for you and your fairgoers health in the coming year. Let's all make it a great summer!

Creative Expense Savings

- Are you spending as a normal year or saving money and not spending as much?
- Will you have local performers?
- Can you get out of a contract with the least financial risk?
- Are you shortening the length of your fair?

How do you survive if no fair this year?

- Public Health: State/Local/Fed
 - Have you talked to them about your area cases?
 - Partners: Extension, Food Vendors, Carnivals, Commercial Exhibitors, etc.
 - What about numbers?
- Attendance capped at 500/1000?
What to do then?
- How do you get the word out? who, when, how and where?
 - What about printed materials?

Idea - Do not put year dates on any tickets, trophies, fair books, advertising, etc. This will save money for next year.

Communication is the key! The decisions are now yours to make!

- Keep a close eye on the pulse of your community.
- Will it hurt or help your community to have the fair or not?
- Now more than ever, communication with your communities is a MUST!
- Can you put enough signage out, reminding patrons of handwashing or mask wearing?

Talk to your carnivals

- How is their staffing going and if they are at full staff and how are they going to sanitize after every guest.

Have discussions with your Sponsors:

- Should you cancel your fair? If you cancel, ask them if you would like for them to refund their money, or hold it over until 2022 fair.
- Try and keep them vested in your fair's vision. Can you help them get to customers they have not reached before? Help with their logos on your website/social media.
- Announce your sponsors on your website and through social media.
- Digital fair books on our websites? This can be viable to cut costs.

Insurance issues:

- Look for insurance companies to add a Force Majeure clause to your insurance contracts.
- Make sure you are protected with your insurance and vendor contracts with a Force Majeure clause that deals with cancellation or postponement of your fair or event, should that happen.
- Remember to also add those Force Majeure clauses to your rental contracts to your buildings.

What about your volunteers?

Volunteers are the important link to your fair. Send out a message to them via letter, social media or when you see them around town and let them know that your fair is doing everything, they can to put a fun-filled event on and keep all volunteers in mind when planning for their safety at all times. Keep them updated!

These are just a few suggestions to think about. Of course, everyone is ready to be out and about at your event. Just remember, these people are our guests and they should be treated as such.

I hope everyone has a great fair and/or festival and stay safe out there!

IN MEMORIAM

Elizabeth Ann McDevitt 1938 - 2021

New Berlin, IL—Elizabeth Ann McDevitt, 82, of New Berlin, died at 12:23 p.m. on Saturday, March 6, 2021, at St. John's Hospital.

Elizabeth was a longtime advocate of fairs and long-time secretary of the Sangamon County Fair.

Her dedication and passion to the fair and community was unparalleled and obvious to anyone who had the pleasure of knowing her, the board of directors wrote on their Facebook page.

"Elizabeth's 35-year tenure as our secretary has provided generations of SCF history and guidance to past and present board members and she will undoubtedly be remembered in the highest regard."

Elizabeth's commitment to the success and promotion of agricultural fairs stretched well beyond the borders of Sangamon County. This joy and passion led to an active role within the Illinois Association of Agricultural Fairs where Elizabeth became the first female officer, serving as the Central Zone Secretary and Vice President and eventually holding a seat on the Board of



Elizabeth McDevitt

Directors. Elizabeth continued to volunteer her time during the IAAF's annual convention so she could greet the multitude of vendors, directors and showmen that she had befriended over her lifetime of service.

Elizabeth was preceded in death by her husband, Robert.

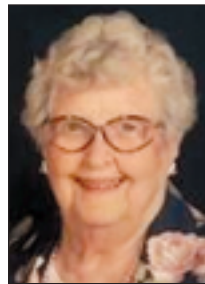
Darlene Henninger 1929 - 2020

Darlene Henninger, 91 of Belvidere, died Dec. 15, 2020. She was born July 15, 1929 in Belvidere, the daughter of Walter and Idora (Green) Hopp.

She married Alvin Henninger on Nov. 19, 1948 and they celebrated 72 years of marriage. Darlene worked 24 years for Belvidere Bank and worked side by side with her husband, Al, in the insurance and auction business.

Darlene was a life member of Calvary Baptist Church, a 75-year member of Prairie Grange, and for 22 years, served as the Superintendent of Concessions for the Boone County Fair.

Al received the Friends of County



Darlene Henninger

Fairs Award at the 2012 IAAF Convention. Darlene received the Friends of County Fairs Award at the 2013 IAAF Convention.

In 2009, both Al and Darlene received the "To Some One Special Award" for their years of supporting 4-H boys and girls.

She is survived by her husband, Al and two sons, and several grandchildren.

Halford Leon Dillow 1941 - 2021

Halford Leon Dillow, born July 1, 1941, the son of Leon and Edlein Dillow in Union County, IL, died Jan. 29, 2021.

Halford married his lifelong partner, Judy Sadler, and together they raised two sons, Carl (Suzanne) and Steve. Both farmed with their father. Halford, a lifelong farmer, also worked as a truckdriver and in construction.

He was elected three times to the school board at Anna-Jonesboro Community High School, and the Union County Farm Bureau board of directors. Halford served many years and was currently on the Union County Fair Board, serving as vice-president for several years.

Halford was preceded in death by his father, Leon Dillow and uncle, Henry Don Dillow.

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