

2024 Clay County Fair Broke All Kinds of Records

By Riva Sharples For The Plain Talk, Aug 23, 2024

https://www.plaintalk.net/local_news/article_9e725b20-60c2-11ef-b8bc-2343f4529c0a.html

The 2024 Clay County Fair was a record-breaker by many measures. Beautiful weather, a growing 4-H program and a host of fun events brought large crowds out to enjoy the fair this year, smashing records in all areas that can be measured (ticketed events and food sales), according to Fair Manager Missy O'Connor.

Specifically, 573 people attended the Mud Drags this year, 956 people turned out to watch the new bull-riding event, and a record-setting 2,351 people packed into the arena for the Demolition Derby, which had its largest number of car participants ever with 51.

Inflatables, meanwhile, drew 1,250 children over the three days with 543 alone jumping on Saturday.

When it comes to food, the Fair Food Stand sold out of nearly every morsel it had. Volunteers cooked 682 pounds of pork loins (an extra 100 pounds over last year) and served 1,169 people with that food over the three days.

The stand also sold 400 pounds of hamburger (up 100 pounds over last year), which translated into 1,280 hand-made hamburgers over the three days. They also sold 1,640 hot dogs, 880 walking tacos, 1,188 boxes of popcorn, and 5,300 bottles of beverages. There were 700 slices of pie sold, along with 660 cups of ice cream.

“Safe to say, by the numbers, it was a very successful fair,” said O'Connor, who shared the statistics with Rotary members during a meeting last Wednesday. “The numbers really put things in perspective.”

The numbers also help the Fair Board and community see that the fair is outgrowing its space in a hurry, said O'Connor.

For the Derby, the Fair Board is looking for safe ways to get more people into the arena, but it's a challenge.

For that reason, the Fair Board has started to look at other options for the future. They are at the beginning stages of thinking about a feasibility study, among other things, O'Connor said.

“We would really love to stay where we are at,” says O'Connor, “But we have really outgrown the space and the numbers keep growing.”

In 4-H alone, Clover 4-H members (those ages 6 and 7) now outnumber the Senior 4-Hers (those ages 14 and over), so growth is expected to continue, which will in turn draw even more crowds. This year in fact, those running the fair ran out of award pins and had to scramble to get more.

Having a successful fair is only possible thanks to the help of many, many volunteers – both as individuals and those who come as part of an organization or business in town, said O'Connor.

There is just one full-time and two part-time 4-H and Fair people who are responsible for putting on the entire fair.

“We have definitely outgrown our workforce,” said O'Connor. “So, we rely heavily on volunteers to run the various activities. We don't have the bodies to continue to grow without the help of these volunteers.”

Volunteers run the Food Stand, Inflatables, 4-H events, and provide personnel for all the major activities at the fair.

“We are very, very grateful for all of the help,” said O'Connor. “The Clay County Fair is only made possible by the amazing community we live in.”

Since 2020, sponsorship of the fair has increased by 30% with a 135% increase in sponsorship dollars received to support the fair, said O'Connor.

Planning for the 2025 fair will begin soon, with fair meetings beginning in September.