



Illinois
Association
of
Agricultural
Fairs

December 2023

TentTalk

'Do More In '24' Is Convention Theme

Fairs are all about having fun and so is the 2024 IAAF Annual Convention, Jan. 12-14 at the Crowne Plaza in Springfield.

We may not be able to guarantee mild weather, but we can guarantee, if you come, you will renew friendships, learn something new to have a better fair and come away with a renewed vision for making your fair the best. We also guarantee you'll have some fun playing games and winning a few prizes.

It all starts a networking opportunity at the preconvention "Let's Have Fun" hospitality event on Thursday evening. Then you will be challenged at the Friday afternoon "Let's Get Acquainted Experience" with a special guest speaker, Mark Sturgill, leadership development coach with Growmark and panel Q and A session on changes to help make your fair more successful and insights into what others did to make their fair more successful.

The Trade Show will open with free beer and popcorn on Friday afternoon at 3 p.m. There will be a full display by vendors with lots of new products and services being offered. Don't forget to visit those with hospitality rooms in the Holiday Inn Express as well as those throughout the Crowne Plaza.

You won't want to miss our Keynote convention speaker, Larry Berry for the Saturday morning breakfast and program. We will honor a new class of "Friends of Illinois County Fairs."

Look for some real magic from Berry, with Wizardy Enterprises of Davenport, FL, is sure to entertain



Larry Berry is keynote speaker on Saturday morning.

and leave you with a powerful message. Originally a native of Decatur, IL, Berry has served in a leadership role and as a trainer for Walt Disney Companies and has managed fairs and facilities in the state of Florida. He was manager of the Kissimmee Valley Livestock Show and Osceola County Fair and Kissimmee.

"It doesn't matter if you are dealing with guests, sponsors, boards or your team, it's all about the experience," says Berry. "As a magician, I create wonder and amazement."

For those who attend the Saturday morning breakfast (tickets are only available in advance), he will share how to create wonder and amazement at your fairs.

All fair secretaries and treasurers will benefit from an opportunity to learn from Jeannette Watkins and Tim Norman with the Illinois Department of Agriculture Bureau of County Fairs. They will offer suggestions on how to make your jobs

(and theirs) easier. The session will be held following the Saturday morning breakfast.

The popular Friday evening Showcase of fair entertainment will feature a great lineup of acts along with snacks, Prairie Farms Ice Cream and Illinois wine, courtesy of Tom & Pam Schahrer. Gary Hadden of Jacksonville (Morgan County fair) is the new IAAF Showcase coordinator. Expect some wonderful additions to Showcase. Country Music Artist Mark Wills will play for 40-45 minutes after Showcase bands are done. Wills is sponsored by Variety Attractions.

The Queen Pageant and Talent Contest both have great participation this year. Some 73 county fair queens will be vying to be crowned Miss Illinois County Fair on Sunday evening. The Talent Contest features junior and senior county fair winners on Saturday afternoon. Both events showcase some of Illinois' finest young talent.

Plan to have a Breakfast Sandwich on Sunday morning, courtesy of A Fantasy Amusements. You can enjoy this while participating in one of the many Round Table discussions, sponsored by Edwards Marketing, Grandstand Entertainment and Illinois Tractor Pulling Association. There will be 8 different topics to help you improve, market and have a successful fair in 2023.

Don't forget to attend the annual business meeting on Sunday at 11 a.m. We will be electing new officers this year. Our big finale will be the queen pageant finals Sunday evening.

Please plan to join us for "Do More in '24" Jan. 12-14, 2024.

The President's Pen

Where has the time gone these past 2 months? Harvest is coming to a completion, Homecoming at schools are over and we are pushing into winter sports, Thanksgiving then Christmas and then the next thing will be in the New Year and the IAAF State Convention (January 12th – 14th, 2024).

With this writing, Zone meetings are coming up with elections of officers and directors and seeing everyone and socializing. Fall is my favorite time of year and seeing the people that have had a hand in making me who I am today. My “fair people” enlightened my life and most of them I’ve been friends for many years from 4-H, FFA and showing livestock across the state. My life is full, and I could not be more thankful and blessed to know you all and call you my friends.

This is my last writing of my column as IAAF President. I have come to know so many people. I thank you all for the kindness that you have shown me during the past two years as your State President. Being the first woman in 111 years that has headed this organization means the world to me. It’s come time that I step down, with elections coming up. The Nominating Committee will present a slate of officers at the Annual Meeting on



Jill Hardesty

spent representing the Central Zone and on the State Board. I will still be on the IAAF state board as past President for two years and of course, I will be hanging around at fairs and local livestock shows rooting on the students of the future of agriculture. We will continue to fight the good fight for additional funding for our fairs and our counties.

May you all have a blessed holiday season with your families, and we’ll see you at the state convention in January!

Jill Hardesty
President

Sunday, Jan. 14, that the membership will vote on. I know I leave you in good hands with the current leadership on the IAAF state board. I will always be thankful for the time I

Address Corrections 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.

Please send all updates to: IAAF Office@illinoiscountyfairs.org or to IAAF Office, c/o Charlyn Fargo Ware, Secretary, 71 West Fairview Lane, Springfield, IL 62711.

Dates to Remember

- **IAAF Dues paid by Fairs**
due December 15, 2023
- **Queen Ads to Sandy Hoke,**
December 15, 2023
- **Queen Banquet Ticket Orders** to
Tom Schahrer, December 15, 2023
- **F & E Reports** due to IDOA
by December 31
- **IAAF Convention, Springfield, IL**
Crowne Plaza January 12-24, 2024
- **Illinois State Fair**
August 8-18, 2022
- **County Fair Day**
August 8, 2024

Illinois Association of Agricultural Fairs

OFFICERS

President.....	Jill Hardesty, Farmer City
Vice President.....	David Hake, Hoyleton
Secretary/Treasurer.....	Charlyn Fargo Ware, Springfield
Past President.....	Ken Tyrrell Sandwich

BOARD OF DIRECTORS DIRECTORS AT LARGE

Bill Jennings (Southern Zone).....	Olney
Tom Moore (Central Zone).....	Jerseyville
Ron Meyer (Northern Zone).....	Manteno

ZONE DIRECTORS

Marcia Craig (Southern Zone).....	Clay City
Kris Lowe (Southern Zone).....	Carlyle
Mary Liz Wright (Central Zone).....	Paris
Gary Mielke (Northern Zone).....	Ridott
Jack Ratcliffe (Northern Zone).....	Belvidere

ZONE OFFICERS SOUTHERN

President.....	Doug Telford, Marion Co.
Vice Pres.....	Wendall Altwart, Effingham Co.
Sec./Treas.....	Ilene Ruroede, Perry Co.

CENTRAL

President.....	Craig McCoy, Fulton Co.
Vice Pres.....	Jay Harris, Morgan Co.
Sec./Treas.....	Joy Dunham, Jersey Co.

NORTHERN

President.....	Jim McGuire, DuPage Co.
Vice Pres.....	Charlie Kennell, Peoria Co.
Sec./Treas.....	Cindy Mielke, Stephenson Co.

www.IllinoisCountyFairs.org

iaafoffice@illinoiscountyfairs.com
IAAF Office
71 West Fairview Lane
Springfield, IL 62711
815-692-2400



These County Fair Queens made their presence known at the IAAF Northern Zone meeting held Sunday, November 5, at the Pitstick Pavilion in

Ottawa. Also joining them and pictured in blue in the front row center is 2023 Miss Illinois Fair Queen Paige Van Dyke.

Busy Legislative Veto Season Expected

by **Bridget Dougherty**
IAAF Legislative ConsultantNo

Hello IAAF Members! Here's a state government affairs update.

Veto Session

The Illinois General Assembly met in Veto Session on October 24 through 26 and will reconvene for the last week November 7 through 9. They did not accomplish much in the first week, so the second week should be busy. Among matters under consideration are further electric vehicle incentives and education funding.

2024 Regular Session Calendar to be Released During Veto Session

The Veto Session is also the time that the regular session calendar is usually released. We are going into the second year of a two-year state legislative cycle, and it is an election year so we will see what the schedule looks like. Your legislative team will provide the schedule to the IAAF Board as soon as it is released. The Board has voted to have another legislative meet and greet event in Springfield in 2024, so once the calendar is released the Board will select the date and we

will let you know the details. Hope everyone can attend.

New Initiative with the Illinois Department of Agriculture

We are working with the Illinois Department of Agriculture on a new initiative to amend the administrative rules governing the operations of county fairs. This change would authorize fairs to submit their premi-

um books to the Department via email instead of sending the printed book through the US mail to the Department. This change would reduce paper waste, and more importantly, costs to fairs in producing and printing the books for the Department's review. We will let you know when this change has been approved by the Joint Committee on Administrative Rules.

IDOA Gives Report Due Dates

Happy Holidays Everyone!

I want to take a moment to let you know how thankful I am for your continued support and for accepting me into the Fair Community.

I just passed my two-year anniversary with this Bureau, and it would not have been possible without your acceptance and willingness to share years of knowledge with me during this transition.

I am looking forward to seeing what the upcoming 2024 fair season brings.

Here is a list of the remaining 2023 important report dates:

December 31: Declaration of

Intent

December 31: F&E Premium Fund Grand Summary Report & Accompanying Reports/Receipts

December 31: 4-H report & justification: Due in State 4-H Office prior to County Fair Office Due Date.

Please feel free to contact me at 217-524-0666 or Jeannette.M.Watkins@illinois.gov with any questions.

Sincerely,
Jeannette Watkins
County Fair Administrator
Bureau of County Fairs & Horse Racing
Department of Agriculture

Fairs Impact American Communities

What impact does the county fair have on American communities?

Betty Jo Krosnicki, Michigan State University Extension

County fairs are more than just a yearly carnival, they're a chance for community building and leadership development opportunities.

"I have to get down to the fair and get my elephant ear!" Or corn dog, or candied

apple, or whatever the deep-fried, sugary treat of choice happens to be. This is a familiar chorus that rings out

across every city or town in America in tempo with the rise and fall of the temporary municipalities we call county fairs, as they make their way from one small town to another through the course of summer. Families with children also know the fair is in town by the magnetic allure

of the carnival rides calling out to small eyes, ears and hearts. This is the extent to which people outside the fair community view this annual attraction.

The scene is much different from the eye of the storm. Certainly the event creates a buzz amongst those "involved" – the exhibitors, volunteers and staff. Though planning starts an entire year in advance, there are so many last minute preparations. Exhibitors rush to finish projects, volunteers make final arrangements, staff double check task lists. The days fly by, the countdown speeds up, conversations everywhere turn to the big event, "What do you have left to do before fair week?"

Most people fail to see the true impact of the county fair. This is likely because they view the county fair merely as a traveling carnival

they may or may not make a visit to this year, or they are so wrapped up in the details of what they need to get done for the event that they never have a chance to enjoy it.

A 4-H alumnus will tell you that like other young adults, they make it home to visit only a few times each year: Thanksgiving, Christmas, Easter and during their home county



All aspects of agriculture remain the heart of Illinois County Fairs.

fair. There are county fairs everywhere, so why make a special trip when you can get the same experience anywhere? Because the county fair is more than a carnival, it is a community. Attending the fair is an opportunity for 4-H alumni to thank the 4-H leaders that have helped them shape their future from the time they first joined until they completed their last project, and into their current undertakings. Sharing in success stories reaffirms the leader's purpose in the program.

The county fair tradition is woven into the fabric of nearly every American community. It presents opportunities for young people to foster life skills such as communication, leadership, goal setting, work ethic, responsibility and sportsmanship. Community service and volunteer leadership are at the root of the success of the county fair.

Generations of community leaders have been born out of the ideologies instilled in our youth and their families through their involvement in 4-H clubs, an institution that furnishes a legacy of volunteer service and youth development; renewing leadership to the local community and beyond. Many hands make light work is a living philosophy that

accomplishes tasks beyond imagination.

The electric atmosphere of the county fair stimulates cultivation of a vibrant community. People from throughout the area are drawn together for a common cause: showcasing the achievements of their citizens and promoting their youth. Individual talents are employed toward the success of

the whole community. Families take time to learn together, sharing in life lessons and building new skills. Cross county relationships are developed, broadening perspectives and intermingling experience. Long-time friendships are rekindled over new memories.

Next time the county fair sets up shop in your town, don't just dismiss the event as another entertainment option. Certainly the affair will have an economic impact, but more importantly the influence on catalyzing community development will have a longer lasting stimulus. Immerse yourself in the community building and leadership development opportunities at your local county fair to discover the real impacts it has on American communities.

This article was originally published by Michigan State University Extension.



Grand Ole Opry member Mark Wills will highlight this year's convention Showcase with a 45-minute

performance. The Country Music Artist is sponsored by Variety Attractions.

Mark Wills Will Perform at Showcases

Look for some exciting music at this year's Showcase on Friday evening, Jan. 12.

Bands will begin at 7 p.m. followed by a special 45 minute segment by Country Singer Mark Wills.

The bands who have committed to play at Showcase so far include: (More to come) Elizabeth Ann, a Nashville acoustics artist; The Longmeyer Band, specializing in Country Rock; Patrick McGreal Band, specializing in Country Music; The

Cincinnati Circus, a mix of some of their Big Circus Show; and Mark Wills, a Grand Ole Opry Member, sponsored by Variety Attractions.

Wills is an American country music artist who has released five studio albums for Mercury Records between 1996 and 2003. His hit songs include: 19 Somethin'; Wish Your Were Here; Back At One; I Do (Cherish You); Don't Laugh At Me; She's in Love; Loving Every Minute; Places I've Never Been;

Almost Doesn't Count; and Jacob's Ladder.

After leaving Mercury in 2003, he signed to Equity Music Group and charted three more singles. Two of those were later included on his sixth album, Familiar Stranger, which was released on the Tenacity label in 2008.

He has a reputation for music and songs that speak to people's heart.

You won't want to miss his free Showcase concert Friday evening.

Updating Mailing List

The IAAF continues to update the TentTalk mailing list. Please forward new names or names that should be removed.

Please send all updates to: IAAF Office@illinois-countyfairs.org or to IAAF Office, i71 West Fairview Lane, Springfield, IL 61711.

The Eye Opening Breakfast

Tickets may still be ordered for the Saturday morning IAAF breakfast.
Tickets will be held for pickup at the registration desk.

Name: _____

County Fair or Associate: _____

Town: _____ Phone: _____

Email: _____

Number of tickets: _____ @ \$20/ticket = \$ _____ Due no later than Jan. 4th, 2024

Please send this request and check to:

IAAF, c/o Charlyn Fargo Ware, Secretary, 71 West Fairview Lane, Springfield, IL 62711

Schedule of Events for 2024 IAAF Convention

"Do More In '24"

113th Annual Convention
Illinois Association of Agricultural Fairs
 Crowne Plaza and Holiday Inn Express
 Springfield Illinois

Schedule of Events for 2024 Convention

All events open only to registered guests with a convention badge.

Thursday, January 12, 2024

- 8:30-11 AM Queen Registration—Downstairs
 Registration Desk—*Plaza Lobby*
 1-5:00 PM Registration Desk Open
 1:00 PM Queen Pageant Rehearsal—*Ballroom*
 4-6:00 PM Carnival Amusement Safety Board
 Mtg. — *Winter Garden, 14th floor*
 8-11 PM **"Let's Have Fun"** Pre-convention
 hospitality and fun—*Capital View*
 —*12th floor*
 Sponsored by the Northern, Central
 and Southern Zones

Friday, January 13, 2024

- 8:00 AM Registration Desk Opens
 —*Plaza Lobby*
 8:30 AM Queen Pageant Rehearsal — *Ballroom*
 10:00 AM IAAF Board Meeting
 —*Lincoln Board Room*

1:30 PM Opening Session
"Leadership By Design"
Special Guest Mark Sturgell, Growmark
 Remarks by Illinois FFA President
 Thad Bergschneider

"What did your fair do differently in 2023?"
 Moderated by Bill Jennings, IAAF Director
 — Plaza FG — 1st Floor

- 3:00 PM **Trade Show opens with a reception.**
 Skinners Amusements hosting
 — *Plaza A-E*
 6:00 PM Trade Show closes for the day

- 4:00 PM Fairs and Exposition Fund Meeting
 — *Capital VI - 3rd floor*
 — *Jeannette Watkins, IDOA*
 5:30 PM Audit Committee Meeting
 —*Turquoise—2nd floor*

7:00 PM **Showcasing—Plaza H-J**
Drinks and Snacks Sponsored by
Burnham & Flower Insurance,
Illinois Wine by Tom & Pam
Schahrer, Ice Cream by Prairie Farms
MC: Kent Casson of Central
Illinois Farm Network.

Sound checks begin at 3:00 p.m.

Associates who have hospitality rooms may be hosting during other hours than those listed for the trade show.

Saturday, January 13, 2024

- 7:00 AM Registration Desk Opens—*Plaza Lobby*
 7:30 AM "Have a Magical Morning Breakfast
 doors open. — *Plaza F&G*
 Tickets Required
 Sponsored by Luehrs Ideal Rides and
 Skinners Amusements
 Special door prize for breakfast
 participants — \$50 Cash
 7:45 AM Opening remarks:
 IAAF President Jill Hardesty
 Pledge of Allegiance: Queen Paige Van Dyke
 Invocation: Queen Paige Van Dyke

- 8:15 AM **All non-ticket fair members and associates are welcome to join the meeting after breakfast.**
 8:30 AM Welcome
 Jill Hardesty, IAAF President
 8:45 AM Presentation of "Friend of Illinois
 County Fair" Awards, Ron Meyer
 Drawing for "Early Bird" door prize
 9:00 AM Remarks: Illinois Department of Agriculture
 9:30 AM **Larry Berry, Keynote Speaker,**
 presented by Luehrs Ideal Rides.
 10:30 AM **Drawing**—All door prize winners must
 be present to win at the time of each drawing.
 10:45 AM Secretaries and Treasurers Meeting
 —Jeannette Watkins, IDOA—*Plaza F&G*
**Please visit the associate member rooms
 or trade show booths.**

- 8:30 AM Queen Pageant Rehearsal—*Ballroom*
 11:00 AM Trade Show & Associate Rooms open
 —*Plaza A-E*
 1:00 PM Afternoon Queen Pageant
 Preliminaries—*Ballroom*
 1:30 PM Jr. Talent Competition—*Plaza H-J*
 2:00 PM All Zone Meeting—*Capital View,*
12th floor
 2:45 PM Past Presidents Meeting—*Capital*
View, 12 floor
 4:00 PM Trade Show closes
 5:15 PM Past State Queen Dinner—*Plaza F&G*
 6:00 PM Sr. Talent Competition—*Plaza H-J*
 6:00 PM Catholic Mass
 —*Winter Garden, 14th floor*
 7:00 PM Evening Queen Pageant Preliminaries
 —*Ballroom*
 8:00 PM Registration Desk Closes

Associates who have hospitality rooms may host during other hours than those listed for the trade show.

Sunday, January 14, 2024

- 8:15 AM Protestant Worship -
 —*Winter Garden-14th floor*
 9:00 AM Queen Pageant Rehearsal—*Ballroom*

- 8:50 AM Enjoy a Breakfast Sandwich & Coffee
 —sponsored by A Fantasy Amusements
 Convene for Round Tables—*Plaza F-G*
 Sponsored by Edwards Marketing &
 Grandstand Concerts and Illinois
 Tractor Pulling Association
 — Moderated by Jill Hardesty &
 Dave Hake
 9:15 AM Roundtables: First Session
 • Grant Writing 101
 — Mary Liz Wright & Terri Quinn
 • Ideas for Sponsorship
 — Boone County Fair
 • Bring Your Book & Let's Compare
 — Effingham County
 • Weather Insurance — Robert Holmes
 • Marketing Your Fair
 — Leon Edwards
 • Are You Prepared? What If?
 — Brandon Oxley
 • Junior Fair Board — Todd Cotter
 • Livestock Meeting — Tom Moore

- 10:00 AM Roundtables: Second Session
 (Same Agenda as First Session)
 11:00 AM Annual Business Meeting
 —*Plaza F-G*

Please Register for Door Prizes
 A Crowne Plaza Package for the 2023 IAAF
 Convention will be awarded.

Welcome - Jill Hardesty, IAAF President
 Minutes
 Introduction of Directors

Committee Reports:

- Secretary-Treasurer report - Charlyn Fargo Ware
- Audit Committee report - Gary Mielke
- Grievance Committee - Tom Moore
- Advocacy Report - Bridget Dougherty
- Legislative Committee - Bill Jennings

Election of Officers

Drawing for prizes donated by Swyear Amusements and other prizes.
All door-prize winners must be present to win.

- 4:00 PM Doors Open for Banquet—*Plaza A-J*
 5:00 PM Banquet Served
 6:30 PM Queen Pageant Finals —*Ballroom*
 9:30 PM Reception for the new Queen
 —*Lobby and Rosewood Dining Room*

Monday, January 15, 2024

- 8:00 AM IAAF Directors And Spouses
 Breakfast — *Ruby Room*
 9:00 AM IAAF Directors Meeting—*Ruby Room*

First County Fair

In medieval Europe, a "fair" was usually a religious gathering, but modern fairs are more about farming.

In the U.S., the first fair was held in Pittsfield, Massachusetts in 1807. It was basically just a sheep shearing demonstration and contest. It was the brainchild of sheep farmer Elkanah Watson, who simply wanted to promote better farming practices. Bolstered by its success, Watson began developing agricultural fairs that included contests and activities for the whole family.

At the heart of county fairs, in Watson's day and today, are livestock shows, where judges inspect animals presented by local farmers for overall quality and award prizes to those with the best livestock. The friendly competition became wildly popular with the agricultural community of Massachusetts.

As word spread about the livestock shows and agricultural contests Watson hosted, other counties began to plan their own fairs. By the mid-1800s, county fairs were widespread across the eastern and midwestern states. Food vendors, baking contests, horse races, and games of chance were added to the rosters to entertain the hordes, and local merchants set up booths to sell their wares to the gathered crowds.

By 1841, Watson's county fairs had grown so popular that New York announced the United States's first state fair. The New York State Fair took place over two days in September in Syracuse, New York with the goal of furthering public education about agriculture and farming practices with livestock shows, lectures, and exhibits. The event was hugely popular, with an estimated attendance of between 10,000 and 15,000. Today, the New York State Fair is still a popular event, so much so that it now takes place over two weeks rather than two days.

IAAF Members Have Had Active Year



Newly elected officers of the Northern Zone are pictured above with some IAAF Board members: left to right, Jack Ratcliff, IAAF Board; Ron Meyer, IAAF Northern Director at large; Charlie Kennel, IAAF Board; Keith Shubbe, Northern Zone Vice President; Tom Simpson, Northern Zone President; and Cindi Mielke, Northern Zone Secretary.



Queen Paige poses with Nadia Kessling, Miss Marshal-Putnam Queen at Northern Zone meet.



To the casual observer this may look like a race between hogs, but it is simply one moment of highly organized livestock judging during a county fair with similar scenes occurring at fairs from north to south and east to west throughout Illinois during fair season when youngsters show off their skills and the quality of their animals.



Keith Shubbe was the winner of a flag for his fair, Will County, at the Northern Zone meeting.



Pageant Director and 2023 Queen Ready for this Year's Convention

Illinois Association of Agricultural Fairs Pageant Director Sandy Hoke and 2023 IAAF Queen Paige Van Dyke will be actively involved in the selection and honoring of the 2024 IAAF Miss Illinois County Fair Queen during the January 12 to 14 Annual IAAF Convention. This is Hoke's first year as the pageant director who will find her hands full and abilities taxed as she shepherds approximately 73 young, beautiful and talented ladies who will vie for the title during a gruelling examination by judges who quiz them on a variety of topics during the convention. The queen contestants will not have many free moments after beginning their quest on January 12 with registration followed by interviews, rehearsals and making sure their gowns and makeup are perfect prior to the final announcement of the winner on Sunday evening.



**Illinois
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