



Illinois
Association
of
Agricultural
Fairs

May 2023

TentTalk

Convention Attendees 'Just Had Fun'!

The 2023 IAAF convention was "Just Have Fun" this January at the Crowne Plaza. From the Trade and Talent shows to the Showcase and queen competition, participants had fun.

Those attending could complete a scavenger hunt in the Trade Show, play Corn Hole throughout the hotel and even shoot basketballs.

Paige Van Dyke of Louisville, IL, 20, was crowned 2023 Miss Illinois County Fair Queen.

Paige represented Clay County at the 112th Illinois Association of Agricultural Fairs Convention on Sunday. Van Dyke is the daughter of Jon and Katrina Van Dyke and is currently attending Oklahoma State University majoring in ag communications with a minor in special education. She hopes to someday start an agriculture program for special needs students.

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

Caroline Smith of Edgar County was named the first runner up, Avery Osman of Union County was named second runner up, Kyla Epplin of Perry County was named third runner up, and Charlie Weishaar of Schuyler County was named fourth runner up.

"I grew up showing sheep and cattle," said Van Dyke. "I want to be an advocate for all those in the livestock barns. I prefer my cowboy boots and cow in hand, but I wanted to step outside my comfort zone."

She traded those cowboy boots



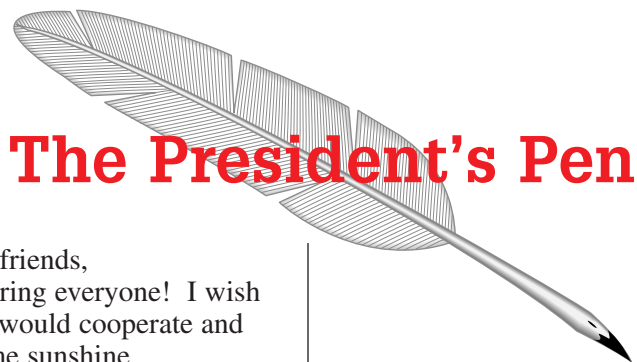
Paige Van Dyke, 20, of Louisville, Illinois, was crowned Miss Illinois County Fair on January xx, 2023, during ceremonies at the Illinois Association of Agricultural Fairs held January xx to xx at the Crowne Plaza in Springfield. She received her crown from last year's Miss Illinois County Fair Queen Addisyn Calloni.

for a pair of heels and teal dress to win the crown.

"My heart did start beating faster as they started naming the fourth, third, second runner up, but I felt really calm overall," she said. "I knew anyone (in the competition) would be deserving. I was really shocked when they called my name. I know God works in magical ways."

The top 15 finalists were: Allison

Stewart of Macon County; MacKenzie Moyer of Macoupin County; Charlie Weishaar of Schuyler County; Bailie Krause of Mason County; Madeline Blaesing of Warren County; Abby Riechmann of Okawville Fair; Caroline Smith of Edgar County; Avery Osman of Union County; Mollie Bennett of Henry County; Paige VanDyke of Clay County; Kyla Epplin of Perry County; Faith
(Continued on Page 8)



The President's Pen

Dearest fair friends,

Happy Spring everyone! I wish the weather would cooperate and bring us some sunshine.

We had a fantastic convention in January and we hope you enjoyed it. Record crowds were in attendance and we appreciate it so much! Thank you to everyone who attended.

We have a new and improved IAAF website to check out: illinois-countyfairs.org. You can reach any of our state board members at any time.

Cathy Redshaw, our queen pageant Director retired at the end of the convention. We wish to thank her for her 13+ years of service to the IAAF board. Along with everything going on, we held interviews with three applicants for a new Pageant Director. It was the committee's recommendation and the IAAF board voted and approved, Sandy Hoke, from Tuscola to be the next IAAF Queen Pageant Director. Sandy has a long history with the Moultrie-Douglas fair and pageant. Congratulations Sandy! Our 2023 fair queen is Paige VanDyke from Clay County. She is a fantastic young woman and represents the IAAF very well.

Since January, Illinois also hosted the IAFE Zone 5 convention in Springfield at the Crowne Plaza. There were 5 states represented: Illinois, Iowa, Kansas, Missouri, and Nebraska (more on this later in the newsletter). The IAAF also hosted a Legislative reception on March 29th (Ag Legislative Day) at the State Capital. Invited were all Senators and Representatives to attend and get to know our fairs. Thank you for helping get the word out to them as well.

The IAAF board has started to work on county fair ag funding to be restored to the original percentage,



Jill Hardesty

and we need all the legislators' help. We may call on you to contact legislators, to explain to them how the reduced funding is affecting your fairs. If we call on you, we'd sure appreciate

the help! There also has been countless hours on phone calls, emails and meetings talking about all things fairs — your IAAF board has been very busy these past 3 months.

Looking ahead, the 2024 convention dates will be January 12 – 14, 2024. We are already working on the program! If you have any ideas to share, please let me know. What do you want to see? Do you want certain topics to discuss? More roundtables? What information do you need for your fairs? All of us are in this together, and we'd like to provide you with information and knowledge you need. Our theme will be "Do more in '24"!

Our fairs are coming up in the next few months, and I wish for you a very successful fair season. Are you doing the same 'ol thing or are you mixing things up and providing your guests new ideas and programs? Try something different and new and exciting!

God Bless!
Sincerely,
Jill Hardesty

Jill Hardesty
President

Dates to Remember

- **Fair Contracts** due to IDOA June 1, 2023; Rehabilitation Reports due to IDOA by June 30, 2023
- **County Fair Day, Illinois State Fair** (moved to Thursday), August 10, 2023
- **Grand Summary Report** due by October 15, 2023
- **IAAF Dues Paid by Fairs** December 15, 2023
- **Queen Ads to Sandy Hoke**, December 15, 2023
- **Queen Banquet Ticket Orders to Tom Schahrer**, December 15, 2023
- **IAAF Convention, Springfield, IL** Crowne Plaza January 12-14, 2024

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Phil Nelson Said 'Dare to be Different'

What will it take to be successful in 2023?

That's the questions IAAF Keynote speaker Phil Nelson asked participants of the 2023 IAAF annual convention.

"Dare to be a little different," said Nelson. "Our past successes probably aren't going to be good enough. Times are changing. We find ourselves not knowing



IAAF Convention Keynote Speaker Phil Nelson challenged attendees to "dare to be different."

which way to turn."

Agriculture has taken the blame for everything from the mud slides in California to the supply chain disruption.

"We need to have the right attitude," he said.

He also encouraged those in the fair industry to become better communicators, whether it's what you want to see in the Farm Bill or what's happening at your next fair. People outside the agriculture industry are dictating how many square feet a gestating sow should have and whether a combine needs to have the dust collected.

"We've got to tell our story in a bigger way," said Nelson. "It's important for fairs to tell that story in a bigger way in the barns and petting zoos, bridging the gap between rural and urban fairgoers."

He related a story of state Rep. Latisha Collins coming to the Ottawa fair and asking Nelson's son to tell her about his cows at the fair. His son, Kyle, told her about Strawberry, his Shorthorn heifer and what he did to raise the heifer. Nelson saw Collins again at the state Farm Bureau convention and she still remembered that conversation with Kyle.

"Our conversations make a difference," said Nelson. "We have to be people making a difference."

He also encouraged fair participants to "keep on dreaming. Dreams are nothing more than creative thinking, and we need that creative thinking."

Both Cyrus McCormick and John Deere were creative thinkers who proved their critics wrong. Because of that farmers ended up with the reaper and plow.

Both men, he said, were determined.

Workshops Highlighted Zone 5 Meeting

By Jill Hardesty
IAAF State President

March 3-5, 2023 was the IAFE Zone 5 Conference which Illinois hosted at the Crowne Plaza in Springfield, IL.

A committee of Tom Schahrer, Fairbury, Ellen Seitman & Jim McGuire, DuPage County, Jill Hardesty, Fisher Fair and Charlie Kennell, Heart of IL Fair planned the weekend event. Many other people from Illinois also helped along the way by helping with registration, stuffing welcome bags, easel changes by rooms and hospitality room help. The conference was attended by 186 fair enthusiasts from five states... Illinois, Iowa,

Kansas, Missouri and Nebraska.

The weekend started on Friday, March 3rd with check-in and a light supper provided with drinks and the famous IL slushies that were greatly enjoyed.

Saturday morning started with breakfast and welcome from IAFE Zone 5 Director, Aaron Owens, Jennifer Giesike, IAFE Chair 2023 and Marla Calico, CFE, President and CEO IAFE.

After the welcome, our programming began with a lot of different workshops including, Competitive Exhibits Programming, Diversity, Equity and Inclusion, Safety and Security for Fairs, Sponsorship & Marketing and Public Perception of Animal Welfare.

A short break, followed by more sessions and lunch. After lunch, programming continued with Emergency Preparedness, Jr. Fair Boards, Technology to help sell more tickets at your fair and a Creative Tool-box workshop. In the afternoon, you could move to other programming topics including Let's be Champions of Agriculture and Competitive Exhibits.

Saturday afternoon, we boarded busses to tour the Capital City and IL State Fairgrounds, visit IL Products Expo in the Orr building on the fairgrounds and then attended the murder mystery "Bullets in the Bathtub" in the Illinois Building. It was about a roaring '20's Speakeasy with a little fun twist of murder.

Update on Illinois Legislature Activity

by Bridget Dougherty
IAAF Legislative Consultant
Spring 2023

Hello IAAF Members! Happy Spring! The following is an update

on state legislative affairs.

Legislative Reception: IAAF's Legislative Reception was held on March 29th in Springfield. This was the first IAAF legislative event since the Covid-19 pandemic. We had an

excellent turnout with a large number of legislators in attendance, including House Republican Leader Tony McCombie and members of her leadership team. It was held at an event space called the Inn at 835 and the venue was excellent. We partnered with the Illinois Wine Association and they brought in a number of attendees as well. Thank you to all fair leaders that attended and please join us again next year.

Legislation Prohibiting Traveling Animals: This year, just one bill was filed that would criminalize the exhibit of an animal in a traveling animal exhibit. That bill was NOT called. However, we will continue to monitor the legislature through the end of Session (now scheduled for May 19) and will contact you if an amendment on this issue is filed.

Legislation Mandating Recycling and Composting at Large Events: We are pursuing an amendment to HB 1370 which would mandate recycling at events with a capacity of 3,500 or more persons effective January 1, 2025. The amendment will exempt county fairs as defined in the Agricultural Fair Act.

Appropriations Request: We have met with a number of key members of the legislature to advance our request for increased funding for fairs. This is a budget item and will likely be decided in final negotiations at the end of Session. We are requesting an increase to the Association's two main budget lines, the Rehabilitation line and the Premium Reimbursement line, to return the fairs to a stable level of funding.



Christian Gibbs won the Senior Talent Contest.



Macy Waters won the Junior Talent Contest.

Talented Talent Show Winners

What a talented group of young men and women who competed in the 2023 Talent Show at the IAAF convention.

Winner in the senior division went to Cristian Gibbs of Lake County with a vocal solo; second place went to a dance theater team from Mercer County made up of Autumn Marston, Laney Baugh, Josie Bruning, Sophia Carlson, Mikella Cornell, Karlee Gerber, Lexi Glancy, Leah Johnson, Zaydee King, Malaynie McIntosh and Kaylee Plohr; third place went to Sierra Lucie of Hancock County with a tap dance solo; fourth place

went to Lydia Cunningham and Norah Willis of Schuyler County with a vocal duet.

In the Junior Division Talent Show, Macy Waters of Calhoun County was the winner with a jazz dance; second place went to Jaycee Bates of Morgan County with a lyrical dance; third place went to Autumn Skye Braxton of Boone County with a vocal solo; fourth place went to Molly Lindeman of Clay County with a vocal solo.

In addition, both Cristian Gibbs and Macy Waters delighted the audience during the Miss Illinois County Fair queen competition.

Schedule Fall Zone Meetings

- Central Zone, (moved to Saturday evening), October 28, 2023
- Northern Zone, Nov. 5, 2023
- Southern Zone, Nov. 12, 2023



Ultimate Joy for 2023 Queen Paige Van Dyke

IAAF County Fair Queen Paige Van Dyke is savoring the moment she receives her crown from last year's Queen Addisyn Calloni. Also pictured are left to right, third runner up Miss Caaroline Smith of Edgar County, second runner up Miss Avery Osman of Union County and fourth runner up Miss Charlie Weishaar of Schuyler County.

Sandy Hoke Is New Pageant Director

It is with great pleasure that the IAAF Board announces to all IAAF member fairs that the new Illinois County Fair Queen Director has



Bill Jennings recognized Cathy Redshaw for serving 13 years as the Miss Illinois Pageant Director.

been chosen.

Interviews were held on February 4th in Springfield by the IAAF Queen pageant committee from the applicants who applied. The IAAF board voted on February 11th on the position.

Cathy Redshaw will be retiring after a wonderful 13 years in April. We wish to thank Cathy on a job well done and thank her for her time and efforts on carrying on such a wonderful event.



Sandy Hoke will assume duties as the IAA Queen Pageant Director.

Sandy Hoke, Moultrie-Douglas Pageant Director, was chosen as our new Illinois County Fair Queen Director for the IAAF. She will create a smooth transaction in the coming months with Cathy Redshaw.

"We are certain that Sandy is the best choice for the position with her overall experience with 30 years in the county queen pageant", said Queen Pageant Chairman and Southern Zone Director at Large, Bill Jennings. "We wish to thank the other candidates for the interviews and impressive conversations with the committee."

Please help us congratulate Sandy Hoke in her new position. We look forward to continuing the great working relationship with the Illinois County Fair pageant.



The Illinois Association of Agricultural Fairs honored several persons with the coveted Friend of Illinois County Fairs award during the association's annual convention in January. Pictured above, left to right, are Steve Gallano, Dave Gallano, Cindi Mielke, Brian

Gallano, Terry Pence and Ed Dame with North American Midway Entertainment. Honored, but not present for the award was Cindy Salisbury. Standing in the back are Tim Norman, Bureau Chief of IDOA County Fairs and Horse Racing, and John Gallano.

Honor Friends of Illinois County Fairs

The distinguished Friends of Illinois County Fairs award went to four worthy individuals at the 2023 IAAF annual convention.

Award winners were acknowledged for their service to agriculture, county fairs and youth.

Cindi Mielke values the role the Stephenson County Fair plays in helping young people grow and develop through 4-H as they connect through the fair. She is a well-deserving candidate for the Friend of the Fair Award. She grew up participating in 4-H and her annual county fair. She has continued as a volunteer for over 30 years, starting with the Stephenson County Beef Association.

In 1999, Cindi became the 4-H Coordinator for the Stephenson County. While working with the Stephenson County Fair Board, Cindi was approached by Jeff Blomsness with All Star Amusements, and asked to start a Lost Children's Tent for parents and children to reunite when they were separated on the Midway.

Cindi worked with Highland College and the Retired Senior Volunteer Program to provide this service at no cost to the fair. It has also become a place for seniors to stop and visit as well as volunteer.

Cindi has also served the past 10 years as Pageant Director for Stephenson County, and as the secre-

tary-treasurer of the Northern Zone for the past 10 years.

John, Steve, Dave and Brian Gallano of Belvidere were recognized for their backbone of support for the Boone County Fair. The family has spearheaded several projects, most recently the installation of new flag poles at the Grandstand.

Other projects include new lighting around the track, new lighting and fencing at the draft horse arena, maintaining and upgrading roads. All the projects were done with the bulk of expenses covered by the Gallano family.

Brothers John and Steve Gallano operate Gallano Farms. Dave and Brian, Steve's sons, operate Gallano Trucking. Steve and Dave (father/son) also are part of the Sheriff's patrol that provide security for the fair. From pumper trucks to street sweepers, the Gallano family is there to help when needed.

For 57 years, **Pence Oil Company** of Watseka has provided gas to the Iroquois County Agricultural and 4-H Club Fair Association located in Crescent City, free of charge. **Jim and Lucille Pence** established the company in 1965. Today it is owned and operated by **Terry Pence and Rick Moyer**. Due to their generosity, the fair's maintenance equipment, mowers, senior shuttles, tractors and

machines for the demo derby and tractor pulls are all filled with fuel, on time and at the hour of need. Despite rising gas prices, the company continued to supply fuel.

Pence Oil Company and their families have actively supported the Iroquois County Fair in many other ways as well – contributing to the queen pageant, exhibiting tea rings for the bake sale and participating in events. They are considered priceless in their willingness to volunteer and help.

In the spring of 2011, **Cindy Salisbury** of Henry, IL, approached the Marshall-Putnam County Fair with the idea of a family fun night during the fair. It was her dream to offer an event where local families could come to the fair and enjoy an evening of fun at little or no cost.

The event has grown every year. Cindy dedicates countless hours to make the event happen, from canvassing the area for local financial support to scheduling various activities and soliciting volunteers from the area and neighboring counties. Each year she brings back family favorites and adds additional attractions to reach more age groups and keep fair-goers coming back.

Cindy has also taken on the responsibility of designing and creating a float for the 4th of July parade to advertise the coming fair.

Nine out of 10 farmers agree:
Financial issues, business or farming problems,
and fear of losing the farm affect their mental health.

Here's one less worry: Help is available 24/7.

Source: American Farm Bureau Federation

Farming has always been a stressful occupation. It's not surprising to learn that farmers' anxiety levels have risen during the past two years. SIU's Center for Rural Health and Social Service Development is leading the effort to create a network of support and resources for Illinois farm families.

The **Farm Family Resource Initiative** seeks to improve the health and well-being of Illinois farm owners and families by:

- Identifying your most important needs, including mental health support
- Linking you to available resources
- Developing a network of partners to respond to your needs
- Where necessary, creating new resources to provide aid

The program offers a range of tools, including a 24/7 helpline, text, email and website services, and education and training for rural partners to improve the health and safety of farm families. Free telehealth counseling is also available for up to six individual, couple or group sessions.



CALL OR TEXT

1-833-FARMSOS

(833-327-6767)

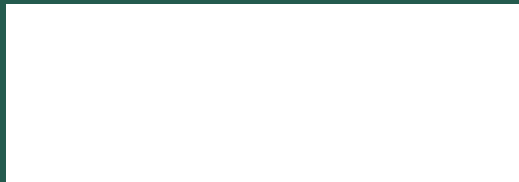
EMAIL

FarmFamilyResourceHelpline@mhsil.com

VISIT

siumed.org/farm

Share the word about this important program with a yard sign or poster at your local county fair, shipped FOC from the Illinois Department of Agriculture and the SIU Medicine Center for Rural Health and Social Service Development. For more information or to place an order, contact Karen Stallman, kstallman88@siumed.edu or 618-713-0759.



Illinois Ag Department Has New Website

Happy Spring Everyone!

Spring is finally here and the excitement of the new Fair Season is upon us. I am looking forward to visiting your fairs this year and seeing firsthand the results of all your hard work.

If you missed my email this month regarding the Department of Agriculture's website change, please take note that we have a new website address, <https://agr.illinois.gov>. All of the necessary forms for your fair are still available on the website, with the addition of the Important Dates Reminder flyer and Report

—Convention

(Continued from Page 1)

Maxwell of Pana Tri-County;
Lauren Phillips of Christian County;
Naomi Dolan of Vermilion County
and Selah Brimmer of Coles County.

Non-finalist awards went to:
Bekkah Schemonia of Williamson County, Ruby Crum Memorial Award; Maci McCoy of Boone County, Best Personal Interview; Morgan Wilderman of Bond County, Best in Communication Skills; Julia Kerkhoff of Moultrie-Douglas County, Best in Stage Presence; Anna Cerrell of Effingham County, Best in Beauty and Physique competition. Sydney Schnitker of Washington County was the People's Choice Award Winner.

Instructions. Please feel free to print and share the information.

County Fair Day at the Illinois State Fair has been moved to a Thursday this year instead of a Friday. Mark your calendars for Thursday, August 10, 2023.

Lastly, here are a few upcoming date reminders. Horseracing track Improvement receipts are due May 1st, Fair contracts are due June 1st, and Rehabilitation reports are due

June 30th. Please look at the instructions on how to do your Rehab. Report on the DOA website.

Please feel free to contact me at 217-524-0666 with any questions.

Wishing You a Successful Fair Season!

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

Illinois Association of Agricultural Fairs Advocacy Fund Appeal

IAAF needs your continued financial support to help our advocacy efforts in Springfield!

Our lobbyist Bridget Dougherty has fought successfully to insure that county fairs funding was not cut and that funding was sent to fairs in a timely manner. Although the FY24 budget that the General Assembly passed recently, included funding for fairs, we are hoping it comes through. There is much work to be done to keep county fair funding going.

Please help us fight for your fair by donating to our advocacy fund.

Name of Fair or Organization: _____

Individual contact Name: _____

Email/Phone: _____

Amount of for IAAF Advocacy Fund Donation: _____

***Please make check payable to "IAAF" and mail to:
71 West Fairview Lane, Springfield, IL 62711***

THANK YOU FOR YOUR SUPPORT & GENEROSITY

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