



July 13
2024

Edgar County

Fair Guide

The Prairie Press

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Edgar County Fair set to bring the party

Options for free entertainment are expanding at this year's fair

BY ROBBY TUCKER
rtucker@prairiepress.net

In its 162-year history, the Edgar County Fair has provided spectacle, amusement and summertime memories to attendees. This year, the Fair is providing something new: a "party barn."

According to Edgar County Fair Board member Mark Brinkerhoff, the fairgrounds, located at 1104 North Main Street in Paris, will play host to a party barn for the first time in its history. One of the grounds' historic livestock buildings will be transformed to accommodate two nights of entertainment, completely free to the public. Other free acts will also be available on the grounds earlier in the week.

"I've been on the board for several years..." Brinkerhoff said. "This is something that I've wanted to do for a while."

Early in the week, live wood carving shows promise to impress south of the restrooms. Later, two acts are set to christen the new barn-turned-concert-venue – bringing coun-

try music and 80s rock to the stage.

■ Bear Hollow Wood Carvers will perform three days straight, with multiple shows each day spanning Saturday, July 20 to Monday, July 22. Bear Hollow boasts a talented crew of artists from across the country, each with a knack for turning wooden logs into detailed sculptures. The primary draw of Bear Hollow's artistic endeavors is their tool of choice: chainsaws. Whether competing in tournaments or hosting live shows, Bear Hollow's carvers use chainsaws to cut, shave and sculpt every element of their detailed pieces.

"Some of the other county fairs we talked to said they've had them (Bear Hollow), and people really enjoyed it," said Brinkerhoff.

These shows will be held on the fairgrounds south of the restrooms, not in the party barn.

■ The era of big hair and rock and roll will make its triumphant return on Friday, July 26. Big Guns, an 80s rock and roll cover band, will perform in the Edgar County Fair party barn. Admission is free.



Special to The Prairie Press

Big Guns, an 80s rock and roll cover band, will play in the new Party Barn at the Edgar County Fair on July 26. Admission to the show is free.

NEW HORSE BARN WILL SERVE FUTURE GENERATIONS



Robby Tucker/The Prairie Press

After serving the Edgar County Fair for nearly 80 years, the Buck Davis Horse Barn was in need of extensive, expensive repairs. Last year, the Edgar County Fair Board decided it would be more responsible to tear down the barn and build a new one.

Fair board representative Mary Liz Wright says the new barn will "serve our community for generations to come... with modern amenities to serve a dual purpose of horse barn and secure storage for equipment." As construction on the new structure progresses, the shell of the building should be fully installed by fair week, according to Edgar County Fair Board member Terri Quinn.

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Special to The Prairie Press

Whiskey Sour, a band loaded with local talent, will close out the Edgar County Fair on the party barn stage on Saturday, July 27. Admission to the show is free.

■ Finally, hometown favorite Whiskey Sour will take the stage to close out the party barn's debut on Saturday, July 27. The band includes Paris natives Cam and Alex Elmore, John McK-town and Eric Hendrickson, as well as Dana, Indiana's Halea Ellis.

For Brinkerhoff and the fair board, offering free shows poses a potential solution to an issue county fairs across the country are facing – attendance. With no admissions fees and varied performances for audiences to experience, Brinkerhoff hopes to attract a new crowd.

“When we went to the fair convention in Springfield in January, it seemed like all the fairs are trying to do some free sideshows – to make it more affordable since everything's expensive,” he explained.

The addition of new varieties of entertainment is not a departure from the traditions of the Edgar County Fair, but an invitation to a new generation. Brinkerhoff emphasized the impor-

ance of attracting a youthful audience to the fair.

“You're going to have to change with the times, and I think we're wanting to change and try to pull in a younger crowd, a different crowd, to get them interested in the county fair... because county fairs across Illinois and probably the United States are slowly dying out,” he said. “That's where the push is, just to try to get the younger generation involved.”

Even though each show will be free, Brinkerhoff hopes the open admission will encourage patrons to invest in the fair in other ways.

“(We're going to) maybe grab some people that wouldn't necessarily come because they want to come listen to the band. And then maybe while they're there, they'll go have a corndog or visit one of the food vendors,” he said.

In addition to the usual deep-fried delicacies and fan-favorite grub available on the fairway, alcohol will be available in the party barn during

the Big Guns and Whiskey Sour sets. The Fair Board also has plans to monetize the wooden sculptures crafted by Bear Hollow's crew.

“The fair will own the pieces when they're done with them, so I think we're going to try to auction them off to help offset the cost of the carvers, because that's also another sideline show that, (if) people want to come watch them, it's free,” Brinkerhoff explained.

In the end, Brinkerhoff hopes the wood carving exhibitions and the party barn concerts will offer a new way to share the magic of the Edgar County Fair with the community. With several

other improvements on the grounds, including a reconstructed horse barn and a bright new LED sign, he believes there has never been a better time to visit the fairgrounds, especially for anyone who hasn't made the trip in years past.

“(I hope they) just come out if they haven't been and walk around and see the fairgrounds, because we've done some improvements this year and... we'd just like to see people come out,” he concluded.

To learn more about the Edgar County Fair party barn and other events happening during Fair Week, visit edgarcountyfair.com.

2024 EDGAR COUNTY FAIR PARTY BARN SCHEDULE

Saturday, July 20

■ Bear Hollow Wood Carvers* – 5 p.m., 7 p.m. and 9 p.m.

Sunday, July 21

■ Bear Hollow Wood Carvers* – 5 p.m., 7 p.m. and 9 p.m.

Monday, July 22

■ Bear Hollow Wood Carvers* – 5 p.m., 7 p.m. and 9 p.m.

Friday, July 26

■ Big Guns Concert** – 8 p.m.
■ Beer Tent

Saturday, July 27

■ Whiskey Sour Concert** – 8 p.m.
■ Beer Tent

*Shows will be held south of the restrooms.

**Concerts will be held in the party barn

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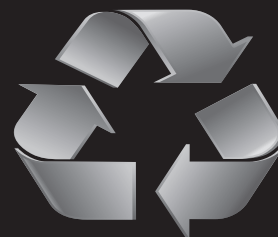
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“It Will Grow on You”

BY NANCY ZEMAN
nzeman@prairiepress.net

“It Will Grow on You,” is the theme of the 2024 Edgar County Fair – and the competition and exhibition in the Art Hall might be the best personification of the theme.

Two of the hall’s superintendents have been working since the beginning of 2024 getting the word out about the opportunities for gardeners, crafters, photographers, bakers and textile crafters in the art hall.

Cathy Macke and Mary Rank hope getting the word out on social media platforms will boost the number of entries in the art hall.

Rank has spent the spring and early summer reaching out to garden clubs and groups, as well as 4-H groups, to encourage them to consider entering the art hall competition. Rank encouraged the 4-H members to enter the Junior Department competition under the direction of longtime superintendent Joyce Ann Parsley.

The Super Sweepstakes Awards will once again be presented, Macke said, which includes a greater premium.

Macke noted in the past some local residents spent the entire year planning their entries. The late Shirley Saiter prepared entries in every department – sometimes multiple entries.

“For years, winning a blue ribbon or

rosette was a source of pride for many,” Macke said. “There are really categories for everyone.”

Both Macke and Rank urge residents to consider anyone, male or female, regardless of age, to think about any projects they may have completed over the past year including photographs, paintings, knitting, quilting, garden products, canned items as well as the traditional bakery competition. One of the most popular in recent years, Rank said, has been the tablescape category, which allows creative license in designing a themed table setting.

“One new addition is the creation of a ‘rainbow of jelly,’” Macke said. “There is no need to have an entry. We’d just like residents to bring jelly from light to dark.” Those will be used to make a large rainbow. The jelly jars can be dropped off on Saturday or Sunday in the Art Hall.

The cost for entries is \$2 each, Macke said, while senior citizen entries are \$1. Entries may be made online at www.edgar-countyfair.com.

“Many people prefer to make their entries in person,” she noted.

In person entries will be accepted on July 17, 18 and 19 in the fair office.

The Art Hall will be open from 4-8 p.m. every day of the fair until Friday, when entries are picked up.



Sydney Melton/The Prairie Press

The Art Hall at the Edgar Co. Fairgrounds is hoping for a higher turnout this year. Residents have been encouraged to prepare their entries throughout the year and to submit entries for multiple categories.

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Three Grand Ole Opry artists headline Edgar County Fair concert

BY BETHANY WAGONER
bwagoner@prairiepress.net

It's not every day that the winner of a national competition makes his way to Edgar County, but on June 20 Scotty McCreery will be doing just that.

McCreery first rose to international fame in 2011 when he competed on American Idol, stealing hearts with his impressive renditions of Josh Turner, Montgomery Gentry and Temptations songs. In Hollywood, the teenager not only stole hearts, but he also managed to snag the title of first-place winner for the show's 10th season.

Immediately after his win, McCreery skyrocketed to fame with his original single "I Love You This Big" entering Billboard's Hot Country chart at number 32, the highest debut for a single since 1990.

The young country star went on to perform across the globe and release multiple albums, including a Christmas album, "Christmas with

Scotty McCreery." He became a member of the Grand Ole Opry earlier this year.

Fair superintendent Shannon Quinn hopes the star will bring some of his famous tunes from the past 13 years to the stage when he headlines the Saturday evening concert that kicks off a week of fair fun.

"We always try to find someone who has had some hits and fits the bill for our audience," Quinn explained. "There are a lot of factors that go into selecting someone and you cannot just pick whoever. The routing has to work out for that person."

Budget, availability and proximity are major factors when Quinn and his fair board look for an act to headline the fair each year, luckily this year the stars seemed to align and McCreery accepted the board's offer quickly.

"It takes a lot of work and we really have to make sure the acts have the availability and that their schedules allow them to come this way," Quinn said.

When it comes to opening acts, Quinn says the scheduling is similar. However, this year he was given the suggestion to seek out a relatively new musician, Zach Top.

"Zach was mentioned pretty early on, and I was told he would be a great fit for the show," Quinn explained. "He is a throwback to 1990's country and does not really fit the modern music we hear... since we were able to arrange things, he has become increasingly popular too."

Quinn says Top is projected to become a headliner, and he is especially excited to see him perform in Edgar County.

"It is going to be a great show, definitely something you don't want to miss," he said. "The guy is going big places, so the concert is a great chance to see him now."

Top, a Washington native who transplanted to Nashville, became the flagship artist for Leo33 in September of 2023 and has already charted in the top 30 of Billboard's Country

Airplay Chart. He has also performed multiple times at the Grand Ole Opry, securing himself as a prominent Nashville musician.

Alongside Top, Meghan Patrick will also open the show. Quinn says the duo were a package deal.

Patrick made her Grand Ole Opry debut last year and with three albums under her belt, the country star will shine on the fair's stage.

"The show is right here in our backyard, so we hope everyone comes out and support the fair," Quinn said. "You won't find a better price for tickets to a country concert anywhere else."

When purchased in advance, the price of tickets starts at \$30 for general admission/grandstand seats and \$45 for the party pit, a standing-room-only area next to the stage. Tickets are available for purchase at www.edgarcountyfair.com.

Quinn says gates open at 6 p.m. and the show kicks off at 7:30 p.m.

WWW.EDGARCOUNTYFAIR.COM

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MEGHAN PATRICK

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Edgar County Fair hosts 65th Annual Queen Pageant

BY VICTORIA LEITCH
vleitch@prairiepress.net

The Edgar County Fair is hosting the 65th Edgar County Fair Queen Pageant at 7 p.m., July 21, at the Edgar County Fairgrounds grandstand. Tickets are \$7 for adults and \$3 for children.

The 2023 Miss Edgar County Fair Queen, Kelsie Dosch, will be relinquishing her title to one of four girls competing. The Miss contestants are Cydney Miller, Briana Reese, Aubrey Lawson and Shelby Clark.

The reigning Little Miss Edgar County Fair Queen, Ella Hays, will also be crowning a new title holder from 20 Little Miss contestants. They are Thea Ford, Paislee Erwin, Leah Butler, Caroline Keys, Maelee Roberts, Oakley Lawson, Wynter Halls, Londyn Krabel, Layla Collier, Bailey Erwin, Nevaeh Keller, Avereigh Goodwin, Brooklyn McCallister, Addi Brown, Ellie Krieger, Brynlee Humphrey, Mazy Wilhoit, Skyelynn Keller, Camreigh Paynter and Ameila Whiteman.



Special to The Prairie Press

Little Miss Edgar County Fair Queen contestants pose for a group photo along with current titleholder, Ella Hays. Contestants were selected by a public drawing hosted by Queen Kelsie Dosch and Ella Hays.



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Special to The Prairie Press

Miss Edgar County Fair Queen contestants pose for a group photo with current title holder Kelsie Dosch. One of four women will be chosen on July 21 to represent Edgar County for the next year throughout the community and at the state pageant held in January.

The Little Miss participants were selected randomly at a public drawing by Dosch and Hays.

"They're awesome girls. It's been great. They have made practices fun and have picked up on everything really well," said pageant director, Tracy Porter.

"(The girls) have put their heart and soul into this. Their dedication has definitely shown. They really want this opportunity," said Dosch.

The 2024 Illinois County Fair Queen, Natalie Evans, will be in attendance this year. This will be the first appearance of the state title holder at the pageant since 2019.

Along with the Miss and Little Miss titles, The People's Choice award is given to one girl from each group. Winners are determined by public votes and donations

made prior to the pageant. A single dollar accounts for one vote.

All money from People's Choice voting is used to fund the pageant, as well as scholarships for the titleholders. Winners of the award are given \$100 cash. Voting for the People's Choice award is available at www.edgarcountyfair.com/queen until midnight, July 20.

"I want to thank the community for supporting me and letting me represent them," said Dosch. "I also want to express thanks to the fair board, my directors, sponsors of the fair and pageant as well as past fair queens. Without them, we wouldn't have this opportunity."

Information about the Edgar County Fair Queen Pageant or other fair week events can be found online at www.edgar-countyfair.com



Special to The Prairie Press

2023 Miss Edgar County Fair Queen Kelsie Dosch will be relinquishing her crown on July 21. She has spent the past year representing Edgar County at events across central Illinois with dignity and grace.

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Powder Puff making its first appearance

SYDNEY MELTON
smelton@prairiepress.net

Fair week is an exciting and eventful time for Edgar County, with carnival rides, fair food and adrenaline-pumping events. In addition to the traditional, something new is coming to the fair this year, sparking interest throughout town.

A powder puff class is finally coming to the Edgar County Fair. While girls have been allowed to compete in the past, this year is the first year for an official auto-cross powder puff girl class.

Auto Cross, a motorsport, is a timed race for cars, trucks or minivans. The makeshift dirt track will have small hills, bumps and junkyard objects to keep the friendly competition interesting. It draws a lot of attention from the county and surrounding towns and nearly everyone enjoys the excitement of competition.

The man in charge of the Auto Cross

event, Kyle Kenny, is excited about this year's changing events.

"I had several girls inquire about it last year. (They) wanted to race with their friends and I had no problem with it," he explained. "There was a powder puff group in the motor cross so it kind of just came off from the motor cross."

This year marks the fourth time the fair has hosted the motor-cross event.

"Every year I have more cars getting entered," Kenny said.

Word of mouth and media spread the news of friendly competition every year, locals and out-of-towners compete together, according to Kenny.

"Eighty percent of the competitors are locals, a few friend groups that like to compete together," he said.

The Auto Cross event has been very well supported and successful the last few years and Kenny has high hopes for this year.

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"I think we are going to have a pretty good turnout this year," he added.

The rules for the powder puff class are the same as the other classes, anyone 16 years and older can enter and significant others and spouses can use the same car as one another.

The entry fee is \$10 and the cars must have working brakes, no glass and all safety precautions must be taken.

With exciting and changing times, the girls competing in this adrenaline rush of a race will have a fun and friendly competition that will have the crowded grandstands on their feet.



Some drivers went all out for 2023's Edgar County Fair Junkyard Autocross. This driver did not let his hood flying up stop him.

The Prairie Press/File Photo



Rescue workers check on Blake Marrs after rolling his vehicle during 2023's Edgar County Fair Junkyard Autocross.

The Prairie Press/File Photo

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DID YOU KNOW....

Edgar County 4-H Association with the help of Moonlight Entertainment upgraded the sound system and speakers on the exhibit barn at the Edgar County 4-H Association grounds. You can also hear from multipurpose room and fine arts hall. New sound system was made possible by donation from the Trogon Family.

Thank you to Abigail and Mindy Mood for creating a beautiful 4-H mural in our art hall! And the giant clover that can be seen from the highway.

We have also created a designated area for photos with a new updated wall in the Fine Arts Building & made a new livestock picture area.




Breakfast

Edgar County 4-H Association serving breakfast at the Edgar County 4-H grounds.



July 21 — 8-10 a.m.

July 22, 23, 24 — 7-10 a.m.

**Be sure to like our
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