

Family Fun at the Fair

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Sen. Jeff Smith writes about all of the fun activities families can enjoy at a local county fair.

EAU CLAIRE, WI - Summer is all about family fun. It's the season with plenty to do outdoors. Family vacations are planned around national parks and monuments. Campgrounds fill up and lakes are busy with boats, kayakers, anglers and swimmers.

With everything going on and the many places to visit, it can be easy to overlook what's happening right in your own backyard, including your local fair. County fairs are held across the state offering fun times and entertainment for your entire family.

Not all fairs are alike; some have midway rides and games, some have musical events and other shows. Other fairs keep it as simple as possible with demonstrations, displays, animal showings and food. Oh, the food. Fair food may not make the list for your healthy diet, but it's certainly hard to resist.

My own family has made terrific memories thanks to our county fair. We were a 4-H family, so my daughters entered projects in woodworking, food preparation, natural science and more. Every year we had animals at the fair and it taught my daughters the important value of responsibility because they had to keep their area clean and care for their animals. My family got to the fair early and left late each day.

For current 4-H members, the fair is still the culmination of a year of hard work. They built connections, learned new things and worked on skills that will be judged during those few days in the summer heat. During the course of the year, they may have honed their shooting skills with an air gun or bow and demonstrated they know how to shoot safely. Their very special project made from wood might win them a blue ribbon. Youngsters can show off the relationship they've built with their animals over the last year. It's so rewarding to see young people with their horses, not to mention all of the other animals, including cats, dogs, exotic animals, sheep and goats.

When some think of a county fair they think of the typical farm experience: showing cattle or hogs. Of course that's a big part of it, but there's so much more. From shooting sports and playing piano to showing your dairy cow and shooting a rocket into the air, there are plenty of activities for kids to enjoy at a county fair.



In my experience, I've been lucky enough to assist in our county fair even after my daughters graduated. It never gets old seeing the excitement of youngsters bringing in their projects. Every year there are creative projects I'd never seen before. When interviewing kids about their taxidermy mounts, they tell the story of their hunt with their parent or mentor. It's always special – and you can share in their special moments at the fair.

At this point of the summer many, if not most, county fairs have come and gone until next year.

But county fairs are the precursor to the state fair. The Wisconsin State Fair begins August 5th and runs through the 15th. Champions in every category from every county have the chance to be entered in the state fair and be judged one more time. It's also your chance to experience fun and sample new food with fellow Wisconsinites.

Maybe your summer included travels to distant and amazing places. After all, we have so much natural beauty throughout this great country. You may have spent your summer relaxing on one of Wisconsin's beautiful lakes or at the local pool socializing with neighbors and friends.

Let's face it, football is on the horizon and that means fall is right around the corner. Visiting the fair might be your last chance to enjoy summer in Wisconsin.

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