

Our County Fair is a Celebration of How We All Work Together

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County fairs bring people from all walks of life together as participants, volunteers and those who enjoy the festivities. At a time when much seems to divide us, the fair brings us back together in celebration and fun.

GALESVILLE, WI - "The Demolition Derby is ON!" a fair organizer told folks in the commercial building. "We have a three or four hour window in the weather and we are going to run the show." Cars and trucks lined up for two miles waiting to get to the show. The rain held off all evening.

That afternoon however the rain poured. While most fairgoers dodged the raindrops, ducks and small children were exuberant.

"My kids had so much fun playing in the puddles," one wet mom told me. "Who would have thought?"

Mid-summer is fair time in Wisconsin. County fairs bring out the kid in all of us.

Stickers, suckers and sunscreen for the young ones; carnival rides, including a train on real tracks, for kids young and old. Calves scrubbed white were shown by white clad teens. Horses with colorful ribbons in their tails munched hay as their youthful handlers swapped tales while waiting out the rain.

One teen showed me the many breeds of chickens she brought to the fair. Her work scrubbing each one was apparent to me – yes, even the chickens have a bath before the fair.

This year, in Galesville, moms and dads were as wet as the chickens after their bath because youngsters dragged them out in the rain to see the fair. No one seemed to mind the mud because there was too much fun to see. And mud was better than intense heat.

“The pig show was delayed because of heat,” one woman told me. “They waited until after dark when things cooled off. Did you know pigs don’t sweat?”

The county fair brings people together from all over our communities. Factory workers, teachers, and farmers work side by side to help raise money for FFA.

“Come to the bulk tank, I’ll buy you some ice cream,” one woman said. “You do know what a bulk tank looks like?” For city dweller, the bulk tank is the large stainless steel tank that holds milk. In this case, the large bulk tank-like structure was part of the FFA ice cream stand. The women remembered, “You milked cows for 25 years didn’t you? Of course, she knows what a bulk tank looks like.”

The fair happens because hundreds of people work together. Adults helping young people with the myriad of 4-H projects; adults making potato salad, grilling brats and clearing tables to raise money for the Lions; old-timers showing off antique tractors; farmers helping teens with cattle, goats, llamas as well as woodworking, leather crafts or amazing engineering displays.

One youth created an entire Civil War battlefield.

Fair superintendents, judges, fair board members, county board members and UW-Extension staff work tirelessly to make sure everything runs smoothly. Keeping things running this year was no small feat. For example, high temperatures caused power outages on the grounds.

People came together to get things working again because that is just how it's done.

Listening to people tell stories about community work and about successful fairs and festivals, I was reminded how interconnected we all are and how we all play so many roles in each other's lives.

The volunteer spirit in Trempealeau County is alive and well. The 4-H and FFA leaders, the athletic team coaches, the volunteer sportscaster, the vacation bible schoolteacher, the feral cat rescuer and the family that adopts that abandon kitty – we all play so many roles that are connected.

The interconnected networks of our local communities function in ways we sometimes can't even imagine.

Does the 4-H leader know the girl who loved bugs will grow up to become a scientist? Does the fellow working the booth realize the little New Testament he passed out will be carried in the young man's backpack to be read for years? Or does the lady know the recipe she shared will become a Thanksgiving tradition passed down to the next generation?

Despite the hot and rainy weather, hundreds of people worked hard to make the Trempealeau County fair a success. If you are looking for a community success story, take time to attend your local county fair and celebrate the time, talent and dedication that make it happen.

To find county fairs in your area, check the Wisconsin Association of Fairs' website at <http://www.wifairs.com/events/fairs>

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