



MEDIA RELEASE

TENNESSEE DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE
MARKET DEVELOPMENT DIVISION

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

August 5, 2009

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TENNESSEE'S COUNTY FAIRS ARE FANTASTIC LOCAL FUN

NASHVILLE, Tenn. - You remember the county fair – where pampered, high-bred cows and goats may well have been bathed more recently than you, and colorful roosters strut in cages and crow all night long in brightly lit barns. It's a place where you can see handmade quilts so incredible that your faith in human intelligence is restored, and where chances are good that, for only a buck at the midway, you can climb up rickety steps to peep down at the biggest pig on earth. Any number of foods tastes better at a county fair than anywhere else in the world: lemonade, hamburgers, funnel cakes, and you-name-it on a stick.

Tennessee's numerous county fairs are still all that and more.

Although the size and style of fairs varies from county to county, the common themes of farm life and country communities keep fairs iconic in the collective consciousness of the public. Today, about 13,000 volunteers statewide donate more than 371,000 hours to make their fairs showplaces of their county's best.

Tennessee's fair season technically begins in June, but when crops start coming in – from watermelons and tomatoes to hay and tobacco – the season heats up literally and figuratively. August is a boom month for fairs across the state, and fairs will continue to take advantage of harvests-- and harvest moons-- right up through September or the beginning of October.

Fairs wrangle to attract the most popular entertainment and activities, from big-name country music acts to pig racing shows. In addition, many fairgrounds are developing year-round educational exhibits like pioneer villages or Native American camps that come to life during the fair with costumed docents, wildlife shows and traditional craftsmen. Demolition derbies, tractor pulls, car and cash giveaways, fiddling contests, barbecue cook-offs and any number of events are used to pull in crowds and heighten excitement.

In Tennessee, only the agriculture-related portions of a county fair – livestock shows, food production and preservation, fiber production and use, and agricultural youth organization programs – receive any state support. Last year, fairs statewide paid out

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more than \$1 million in agricultural premiums for more than 200,000 agricultural exhibits. More than 3 million people visited Tennessee fairs in 2008.

Visiting a county fair is an uplifting experience. It's impossible not to feel positive, looking around at an event held specifically to celebrate everything good and hopeful about a community. Respect for the past, promise for the future, and a whole lot of a fun packed in the middle – it's all there in one fantastic package.

To find Tennessee county fairs, visit the Tennessee Department of Agriculture at www.picktnproducts.org. A complete listing of fairs throughout the state includes dates and contact information.

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