



Corporate Backgrounder

The Big Fresno Fair: More than just the Central Valley's largest event!

Founded in 1884, The Big Fresno Fair is the 4th largest fair in the State and represents the 21st District Agricultural Association, an entity of the California Department of Food & Agriculture's (CDFA) Division of Fairs & Expositions. The Big Fresno Fair holds the rare distinction of operating in the same location at the same time of year since its inception. The Fresno Fairgrounds encompasses 165 acres of land in the City of Fresno, which is owned by Fresno County and leased to the Fair under a 50-year land lease that allows it to continue to operate.

The 2020 Big Fresno Fair will mark its 137th year of this Valley tradition and amid COVID-19 health concerns it will look very different with drive-thru and virtual components in an effort to continue to bring the community this beloved tradition.

MORE THAN JUST A FAIR

The Fresno Fairgrounds is home to not only the annual Big Fresno Fair, but more than 250 different year round events ranging from home shows to international cultural celebrations, from weddings to corporate workshops, and much more. Additionally, the Fair operates two year-round satellite wagering facilities – The Starting Gate at the Fresno Fairgrounds and The Polo Lounge at Club One Casino in Downtown Fresno.

Through support of its non-profit Foundation, Friends of the Fair, the Fairgrounds has the only museum dedicated to the broad Fresno County history – The Fresno County Historical Museum, which has welcomed guests since opening in 2015. Additionally, there is a separate museum dedicated to the history of the Fair – The Big Fresno Fair Museum, which opened in 2012.

A BUSINESS & ECONOMIC DRIVER

Even though The Big Fresno Fair is a part of CDFA's Division of Fairs & Expositions, the Fair does not receive any State revenue. Instead, the Fair is self-funded through business operations and generous community contributions. More than 1.7 million people visit the Fairgrounds annually! This number continues to grow as the Fairgrounds' popularity increases each year due to the more than \$11 million invested into the facilities over the past 15 years. The Fresno Fairgrounds serves as an economic stimulator for the community, contributing more than \$77.1 million in economic impact to Fresno County annually, according to an independent report from 2015.

A MISSION TO CELEBRATE, EDUCATE & HAVE FUN

Born out of a desire to showcase the agricultural bounty of the region in 1884, The Big Fresno Fair continues to showcase agriculture, providing a link between urban and rural California. This is done by educating Valley residents on the region's rich agricultural heritage and vast industry through exhibits and educational attractions. Educational exhibits and attractions can be found throughout the grounds that not only focus on agriculture but also highlight water conservation, the environment, and more. In addition, the Fair supports education through its variety of programs – Fair Education, 4.0 & Above Scholastic Achievement Program, Big Band Review, and more.

The Big Fresno Fair celebrates its community in countless ways, educates Fairgoers through a variety of programs and exhibits, and undoubtedly has fun with numerous family-friendly attractions!



A LEADER IN THE INDUSTRY

The Big Fresno Fair is one of the few fairs to receive four Merrill Awards, which is the top honor given in the fair industry which recognizes fair programs that demonstrate outstanding vision, leadership, and excellence, bestowed by the Western Fairs Association (WFA). The Fair won all four of these Merrill Awards under its revered leadership team of John C. Alkire, former CEO (2004 - 2020) and current CEO of Friends of the Big Fresno Fair; Stacy Rianda, Deputy Manager II; and Lauri King, Deputy Manager II.

- 2007 - Pirates in the Park attraction in Table Mountain Rancheria Park
- 2012 - "Feed the Need" Community Food Drive
- 2014 - Big Fresno Fair Museum and the "Heritage Talks" documentary
- 2017 - Fresno County Historical Museum

In 2009, The Big Fresno Fair was also named the first-ever Western Fairs Association California Feature Fair when representatives from throughout the Western United States, Canada, and Mexico visited the annual event to learn about the Fair's capital improvements, exhibits, and special programs. In 2010, The Big Fresno Fair was also featured on PBS' series with Huell Howser called "California's Golden Fairs." The series highlighted the importance of Fairs to the communities they serve.