



ALL ACCESS

The Blue Ribbon Foundation, the nonprofit charitable arm of Western Fairs Association, produces this annual report showcasing the most compelling and positive stories taking place at fairgrounds throughout the West. As fairs and their communities work together, amazing things happen. Take a look.

SAVING LIVES



11,000 pints of blood collected

According to the Red Cross, every two seconds someone in the U.S. needs blood. The summer months can be especially challenging to keep the blood supply at the needed levels. That's why the Big Fresno Fair partnered with the Central California Blood Center—the sole provider of blood and blood products for the 31 hospitals in Fresno, Tulare, Madera, Kings and Mariposa Counties—for a Pint for a Pass Blood Drive.

"The need for blood is great and the need is now," says John Alkire, Big Fresno Fair CEO. "Every donation can help save a life and someday it might help save you or someone you know."

Donors receive a voucher for a Buy One, Get One Free admission ticket to the fair, a commemorative t-shirt and are automatically entered to win concert tickets, horseracing reserved seat tickets and other fair entertainment giveaways.

The partnership between the fair and the blood center was established as part of the fair's Give Local campaign that was first started in 2009 with the Drought Relief Community Food Drive that collected more than 28.6 tons of food for Central Valley residents in need. As the Pint for a Pass Blood Drive enters its third year, the Big Fresno Fair and the Central California Blood Center hopes to top last year's total of more than 11,000 pints of blood.

"We are very grateful the Big Fresno Fair continues to partner with us on their Pint for a Pass Blood Drive that offers donors a chance to be part of the Valley's longest standing tradition and save some money, while also giving one of the most precious gifts—blood," says Dean Eller, Central California Blood Center president and CEO. "Donating blood is a rewarding experience, because you walk away knowing you possibly helped save up to three peoples' lives by taking an hour out of your day to donate."



SHARING OUR STORY



28 fairs shared the story of the first American fair

The fair industry is rich in community heritage with many fair patrons attending every fair for decades—first as a child giddy with excitement and later as an adult, sharing the fair experience with children and grandchildren. But, fairs don't just provide summertime fun. They also educate millions about agriculture, provide human/animal interaction and showcase the best communities have to offer.

With the 200th anniversary of the American fair in 2011, fairs throughout the West celebrated this momentous achievement by sharing the colorful history of the founding father of fairs, Elkanah Watson, the first fair held in Pittsfield Massachusetts and the rise of the modern agricultural fair. Watson created a community structure through the development of agricultural societies that allowed residents to celebrate its accomplishments in a nonpolitical, nonpartisan environment. His invention permeated the America culture with more than 2,000 fairs sprouting up across the nation. Sharing this remarkable story is our duty, our responsibility and our honor.

From the Pima County Fair in Arizona and the Puyallup Fair in Washington to the Sonoma-Marin Fair in California, fairs customized Western Fairs Association's *Made in America* exhibit with photos from their archives and memorabilia collected from local fair fans.

"As someone who visits more fairs than most people, it was a special treat to see so many fairs tell the story of our founding," says Stephen Chambers, Western Fairs Association's executive director. "I look forward to seeing *Made in America* at fairs for years to come."



UNITING COMMUNITIES

When the governor of California eliminated fair funding in 2011, the Tulelake-Butte Valley Fair was hit hard—nearly 40 percent of the fair’s annual budget was stripped. Yet, Tulelake viewed the fair funding elimination as an opportunity for progressive change and adopted a positive approach to meet the challenge of sustainability.

The fair concluded it would have to make up the difference by decreasing operational expenses and increasing revenues from current and newly developed income sources. Engaging the community was paramount. Two public forums were held in early 2011 to inform the community members of the funding crisis and to make them part of the solution. From these, the first building blocks of change were put in place—Pay What You Can Admission and the Tulelake-Butte Valley Fair Keeping the Dream Alive Benefit and Auction.

Since its inception in 1952, the Tulelake Fair has offered free admission. But the fair knew it would have to generate more income during fairtime and charging an admission fee would meet this goal. However, the idea of implementing a mandated admission fee after 60 years of free admission, coupled with a poor economy, presented its own potential negative financial impacts. So in June 2011, the fair introduced a new, innovative and community-based admission concept—Pay What You Can. Fair patrons were provided with a suggested value of admission and they decided to pay the suggested price, more, less or nothing at all. The introductory program generated \$23,600.

“This demonstrated to our local communities that this is a fair of shared responsibility and its future is dependent upon community support,” says Dave Dillabo, fair CEO.

The introductory benefit dinner and auction was held in July and drew more than 550 fair supporters. The local and surrounding communities greatly supported the event—from donating auction items to volunteering.

“While the event netted more than \$60,000 and exceeded all goals, the largest and most un-measurable success was its ability to unite the local and surrounding communities for the common goal of supporting the fair and, in turn, displayed just how important and relevant the Tulelake-Butte Valley Fair is to the people of the Klamath Basin area,” says Dillabo.



\$84,000 raised by the community to help save the fair



FOSTERING EDUCATION

Each year the Salinas Valley Fair Heritage Foundation offers a \$1,500 scholarship to a local exhibitor. In exchange, the exhibitor raises a market animal for the fair—all expenses paid. When the animal sells at the Jr. Livestock Auction, the proceeds are donated back to the Salinas Valley Fair Heritage Foundation to support and improve the fair—teaching the valuable lessons of giving back and community pride.

“Being selected to receive the scholarship and raise the animal is not the reward,” says Andrew Seeley, the 2011 Heritage Foundation Scholarship recipient. “The true value lies in having the honor of playing a part in a project that is bigger than myself, contributing to a positive cause that helps people in the community.”

The Soledad Future Farmer of America exhibited his market hog, weighing in at 217 pounds, and placed as the Reserve Weight Champion. The hog sold for \$138 per pound to 15 buyers—bringing in a grand total of \$29,946.

This year, Nicole Hardoy with the King City FFA showed her market lamb for the Salinas Valley Heritage Foundation. In true community style, the lamb sold for a whopping \$350 per pound, for a total of \$49,000. There were 22 buyers.

“We are very fortunate to have such a generous community who come out to the fair and support our youth each year at our Junior Livestock Auction,” says Sarah Cummings, Salinas Valley Fair CEO. “The market prices that the exhibitors receive here are truly unbelievable!”

The community outpouring doesn’t stop there. Salinas Valley Fair is one of the few fairs in California whose Jr. Livestock Auction consistently tops \$1 million—with many of these dollars going directly to fund the education of the valley’s youth.



**\$1.5 million raised
at the Jr. Livestock
Auction**



BENEFITING THE COMMUNITY



232 Items consigned
to the sale

The elimination of fair funding in California has fairs across the state scrambling to fill the budget gaps.

"Great fiscal oversight by Board of Directors and conservative budgets for many years has our fairgrounds poised to weather the storm, but we need to create some revenue-generating events to fill in our gaps," says Cliff Munson, fair CEO. "We need to replace nearly \$250,000 in income and services and are trying to start interim events that will benefit the community and help with our funding needs."

Fair fans throughout the West have always supported fairs and have rallied to help sustain fairs during this difficult time by purchasing drive-thru dinner tickets, crab feed tickets, participating in raffles, offering in-kind services and more.

"We just thought our residents were strapped and wanted to hold a fundraiser that provided a community service as well as income for the fair," said Munson.

From this desire, the first Siskiyou Consignment Auction was born. From tractors and lawnmowers to antiques and boats, the fair happily collected donations of items to sell. Residents came out in force consigning 232 items. The fair gained a percentage of items sold, buyers walked away with treasure and sellers earned some cash by cleaning out and cleaning up.

The fair netted more than \$11,500 and hopes to make this an annual fundraiser.

