



FRYEBURG FAIR'S ANN-MICHELE AMES & THE AGRICULTURAL EXHIBITION CENTER

Ann Michele Ames of Conway, NH, started working at Fryeburg Fair in 1980. In 1985 she became the superintendent of the Fair's Agricultural Exhibition Center. Also known as the "Ag Building" it is the Fair's showcase of home talents and personal bests. The competitive categories receive hundreds of entries during the pre-opening weeks of Fryeburg Fair. Jars of jams, canned fruits & vegetables, knitting, crocheting, quilting, needlepoint, sewing, costuming, pottery, rug braiding, photography, art, paintings, sculpture, baking, cooking, plants & flowers - the official list is very long! The details, specifications and rules on entries for the Ag Building are listed in over 50 pages of the annually published Fryeburg Fair Book which is online at www.fryeburgfair.org.



*Ann-Michele Ames, Superintendent
Agricultural Exhibition Center, Fryeburg Fair*

Ames says, "The Ag Building is about featuring home crafted items to inspire and engage further agricultural learning for fairgoers and especially for young people. It is creative and artistic and also involves very practical life skills. We have tons of entries. We also feature about 12 Grange exhibits along with a few independent farm displays. We get a lot of participation because we offer pretty good prizes. And of course because we're Fryeburg Fair! One year we had over 600 individual photos. That's a lot! Hard to find space for 600 photos to be laid out and thoughtfully displayed. Now we restrict them to only four per person. Our vegetable entries are also very popular. Every category in our building is open to adults and youth. We have people who have been entering for decades, and they enter many items in multiple categories."

Running the Ag Building would be an organizational nightmare for many. Ames says, "If you don't keep up with it, it would be a disaster. You can't start a week before the Fair. It takes planning and coordination. And this year will be our first year using a computer program called ShoWorks. Entrants can fill out their entry forms online for the first time ever. This is going to be very helpful."

Ames has about 30 employees that help set up the building and ten of them work during Fair week answering questions and overseeing the operation. It's all hands on deck for the breakdown and cleanup of the building on the Monday after the Fair.

Ames is used to a hefty schedule. Not one to let age diminish her energy level, she just turned 71 and works full-time for RWN Property Services and Nu Rock Creations in Conway, NH, as their office manager. She is the Fire Commissioner for the Redstone Fire Department and maintains the Redstone Park Garden. She is a Justice of the Peace and a Notary. She also helps care for younger family members who reside with her.

Ames, nee Henley, and family (parents Arvel and Jeanne and brothers, Stephen and Robert) moved permanently to Conway from Framingham, MA in the late 80s. "We were 'summer people' and were here most weekends and for all holidays as my grandparents (Ernest & Margaret Wood) lived here." Ames attended Becker College in Worcester, MA, and studied accounting. Her career included working as the Manager of Domesticates at Caldor Department Stores. She has also been the Office Manager at Zayre's in Natick, MA, and was the Assistant Manager at 7-Eleven in North Conway.

for 14 years. She has been an evaluator of agricultural fairs for the State of Maine's Department of Agriculture, Conservation and Forestry, serving two three-year terms. Ames' brother, Robert, has passed, and brother Stephen lives in North Carolina and just retired from a career building racecars.

For Fair 2021, the Agricultural Exhibition Center employees will dress in period costumes during the day. They are participating in a State of Maine bicentennial celebration contest sponsored by the Maine Association of Agricultural Fairs.

"People love to see the old ways of doing things. One exhibitor this year will be displaying reproduction dresses. It is nostalgic and warms the heart. Once we featured an old apron display and it was very popular."



*Joline Gushee & Erlon Jones, Assistant Superintendents
Fryeburg Fair's Agricultural Exhibition Center*

The Ag Building operations benefit greatly from the work of long-time dedicated Assistant Superintendent Joline Gushee who has been with the Fair for 40+ years. Gushee works for the NH Judicial Branch 3rd Circuit Court Conway and has been there for 36 years and has been the bail commissioner for over 30 years. Gushee says, "I enjoy working with people and their exhibits. I especially like seeing the children and their accomplishments. We have a great staff and I am proud to be part of the Fair family."

Beginning this year, Erlon Jones, formerly from the Fair's Farm Museum, will join Ames as an Assistant Superintendent.

Ames says, "Joline is wonderful. She handles all the paperwork and the computers. She knows the operation inside and out. I'm thrilled Erlon Jones is joining our department. Erlon has many skills and we love his dry humor! He plans to also do a display of gold sluicing, the art of panning for gold. And he likely has many great things in mind for fairgoers"



*Norma C. Sunshine King of Lovell, Maine, has
won over 300 ribbons for exceptional entries!
Here with her winning apple pie.*

Norma King of Lovell, Maine, has been entering Ag Building competitions for over 40 years, and says, "When we moved to Maine, the first thing we did was buy lifetime passes to Fryeburg Fair. The last time I roughcounted, I had won about 300 ribbons. I'm competing against wonderful competitors. I do a little photography, enter my harvested vegetables, dried flowers, window boxes, plants, and I do all five of the baking contests held during the week of the Fair. It brings joy to my heart. If you don't win, you're so happy if one of your friends wins."

King's husband, Dick, worked for the Fair's Public Safety Department for 35 years. He passed in 2015. They were married for 65 years.

King adds, "Ann-Michele is the best person at the whole Fair! She runs the entire Ag building and is so excellent and so patient. I marvel at the beauty in that building. They couldn't have a better person running it. All of the competitors dearly respect her. She always listens and is so balanced. She responds to all questions, and if she doesn't have the answer, she will go find it. It takes a whole team to run the Ag Building and she knows how to run a team. I give her five stars and a very big blue ribbon!"

by Rachel Andrews Damon, Fryeburg Fair Publicity & Advertising