



**STATE FAIR PARK
& Event Center**



**ANNUAL
REPORT
2023**



Our Mission

Central Washington Fair Association's mission is to facilitate commerce, education, and leisure activities through production and promotion of the annual Central Washington State Fair and public events throughout the calendar year at State Fair Park & Event Center.

State Fair Park & Event Center is operated by the Central Washington Fair Association, a self-funded 501(c)(3) non-profit organization.

Central Washington Fair Association Foundation's mission is to raise funds to preserve and improve our agricultural programming, youth education & State Fair Park buildings and fairgrounds. We are committed in helping the State Fair Park continue to thrive as a leading cultural and educational organization.

Become a Member of the Central Washington Fair Association

By becoming a member, you will become part of an agricultural, educational, cultural, historical, and entertainment pillar of the Yakima Valley. You will have a voice in shaping, preserving, and enhancing our grounds.

Learn more at: statefairpark.org

2023-2024 BOARD OF DIRECTORS

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A Note From Our President



One of the common questions I get asked when I am out in the community talking about the Fair and the initiatives we are working on is, why does the Fair need a Foundation?

I usually follow up this question by sharing some background on how the Fair operates and how it is funded. Most people have no idea that Yakima County owns the fairgrounds and buildings and that the Central Washington Fair Association, a 501(c)3 non-profit, has a long-term lease to operate the facilities and produce the annual Fair. They are even more surprised when I tell them the Association is approximately 95% self-funded from producing the Fair and hosting year-round events. This annual cycle provides for the next year's operating funds with limited funds left over for reinvesting in staff and programming.

Many fairs across the country share this same operating model and quandary. It is very common for Fairs to have a Foundation that comes alongside them to get the community involved in fundraising to support their education and agriculture initiatives as well as capital campaign projects.

Recognizing the importance of establishing a fundraising mechanism to support the Association's mission and educational initiatives, staff, along with the Central Washington Fair Association Board of Directors, created the Central Washington Fair Association Foundation, which officially launched in 2022.

We held our first Foundation fundraising event in June of 2023 to kick off the SID MORRISON AGRICULTURAL EDUCATION FUND with a roast and toast event honoring Sid Morrison. Monies raised that evening provided the funds necessary for the Association to launch two new educational programs for the 2023 Fair.

One of those new programs, "Perfect Plate," is a new program in which 4th grade students throughout the Valley learn about Washington's commodities and healthy eating habits; they participated by bringing their projects to be displayed at the Fair.

At the conclusion of the 2023 Fair, "The Perfect Plate" program was submitted to the Western Fairs Association for consideration of the annual "Merrill Award." We were surprised and honored to be named the "2023 Merrill Award" winner, the highest honor of the Western Fairs Association, and given to a member fair that clearly demonstrates innovation, vision, and excellence.

This award belongs to the teachers who taught the lesson plan and the 1,100 4th graders who learned about Washington commodities and proudly created their own "Perfect Plate." This award belongs to parents of the 4th graders who brought their students back to the Fair to see their child's perfect plate on display. This award belongs to the Association staff, who had the vision and creativity to create this program. This award belongs to the community who came out to support the Fair and viewed the student projects on display in the Ag Building.

Last but not least, this award belongs to those donors who believe in the Association's mission and vision by contributing financially to the SID MORRISON AGRICULTURAL EDUCATION FUND.

I hope this story demonstrates and answers the question, "Why the Fair needs a Foundation." There would be no award, no story to tell, nor would our Valley's youth be positively impacted through these new educational programs without the financial support of our community and donors.

On behalf of myself, our passionate and talented staff, and our Board of Directors, we are committed to preserving and supporting the growth of the Fair's agriculture and educational initiatives, ensuring that the Fair's founding mission lives on for generations to come. We look forward to the community's continuing financial support in helping achieve this mission.

2023 Highlights

Two new Yakama Nation Historical Displays Installed in the SunDome

The installation of two historic displays in the Yakima Valley SunDome are dedicated to the Yakama Nation and represent a significant acknowledgment and celebration of the rich history and culture of the Yakama people. The Yakama Nation have been stewards of the land now known as Washington State for thousands of years. Those displays, strategically placed in the Yakima Valley SunDome provide an educational and inspirational experience for visitors, offering insights into the Yakama Nation's traditions, values, and contributions to the region.



State Fair Park ~ Creating Valley Traditions

2023 4th of July Community Celebration



The 2023 4th of July Community Celebration presented by Yakima Federal was a FREE and spectacular event, drawing large crowds from all over the Yakima Valley to commemorate Independence Day. The day was filled with a variety of activities, including live music performances, family-friendly games and an impressive selection of food vendors offering delicious treats and traditional American fare. The highlight of the event was the fireworks display that lit up the sky, with lots of oohs and ahhs from everyone.

23,000 people attended this free community event.

4th Annual Drive Thru Holiday Light Fest



This year, the Holiday Light Fest saw an impressive turnout, drawing in over 24,000 people who came to experience the magical journey from the comfort of their vehicles. Working together with community partners, Perry Tech, and Featherland Ranch, the holiday festival offered enchanting holiday scenes, showcasing a wide array of lighted vignettes that illuminated the park and created a festive atmosphere. With such a significant number of visitors, the event not only brought joy and holiday spirit to many but also supported local non-profits, Yakima Humane Society & Salvation Army, bringing the community together in philanthropy and celebration.

2023 Community Impact

TWO NEW YOUTH EDUCATION PROGRAMS DEBUTED AT THE 2023 CENTRAL WASHINGTON STATE FAIR

FOURTH GRADE "PERFECT PLATE" PROJECT

This new education program was created for fourth grade students based on the MyPlate healthy eating initiative from the USDA. Students learned about nutrition and created their own "Perfect Plate" using Washington grown commodities.

- 1,100 4th grade students from across the Valley participated in this project.
- The Association's staff created the teachers' lesson plan to support this learning project. Materials necessary for the students to create their "Perfect Plate" were provided to the schools at no cost.
- After the students had completed their "Perfect Plate", Association staff returned to the schools and picked up all 1,100 so these could be displayed in the Ag Building during Fair time.



CENTRAL WASHINGTON STATE FAIR SCHOOL "FAIR FIELD TRIPS"

For many students, participating in their school's Fair Field Trip is their only opportunity to attend the Fair to learn about the importance of agriculture to, and in, our Valley. A full day of learning was planned for the students as they rotated around five different learning zone. Each zone provided hands-on activities: make-and-take projects, educational presentations, rocket launches, and getting up close with the farm animals.

- 2 days of learning
- 1,200 students from across the Valley participated
- 6 bus scholarships in the amount of \$3,100 were given to under served schools - paying for the bus and driver to make the trip possible

These programs were made possible by the Central Washington Fair Association's Foundation through the **Sid Morrison Agricultural Education Fund**.



SUNDOME ATTENDANCE



2022	2023
194,897	102,091

STATE FAIR PARK ATTENDANCE



2022	2023
341,989	470,347

LODGING ROOM NIGHTS GENERATED



2022	2023
23,918	22,139

VISITORS OUTSIDE 50+ MILE RADIUS



2022	2023
38,080	35,534

ESTIMATED ECONOMIC IMPACT



2022	2023
\$23.1	\$23.7
MILLION	MILLION

2023 Fair Highlights

MEET OUR MASCOTS

The Fair introduced two new mascots to the Fair family this year, an Apple and a Cow. A community mascot naming contest was held and the new mascot names were announced on the final Sunday of the Fair. Apple Jack is the official name of the Fair's apple mascot and Mootilda is the official name of the Fair's cow mascot. The mascots will serve as Fair ambassadors around the community to help promote the annual Fair.

An apple and a cow were selected to support the Fair's commitment to agriculture education and bring to life two of the top commodities produced in our area. They will also help us by continuing to promote the importance of agriculture to our Valley.



The Toyota Main Stage Concert Series had two sell-out shows: Jeremy Camp and 38 Special. Fairgoers also enjoyed the shows at the Coca-Cola Grandstand - Monster Trucks and Broncs, Barrels, and Bulls with several of the Grandstand shows sold out.

SOME FUN FAIR FACTS:

- 14,576 Corn Dogs
- 14,364 Kurly Frys - (over 51,000 pounds of potatoes)
- 11,893 Elephant Ears
- 1,931 fairgoers received Free Fair Admission by donating school supplies
- 1,462 students participated in the Fair Field Trip days
- 2,500 free books distributed during Fair Field Trip in STEAM Building
- 8,000 dog tags were made by kids at the AJAC booth in the STEAM Building
- New food item: Krispy Kreme Burgers - 3rd best seller for vendor
- New food item: Pickle Pizza - 45% of all pizza sales for vendor

WE ARE AN AWARD-WINNING FAIR!

A representative of the Washington State Fair Commission, who evaluated the Fair this year, awarded two "Commissioner Awards." One for the STEAM Building and another for the newly created area, "Celebrate the Valley", featuring educational exhibits, activities, and stage performances to showcase the diverse cultures of the Valley.

The Central Washington State Fair also received four Agricultural awards and one Sponsorship award from the International Association of Fairs and Expositions (IAFE). These awards honored our featured agriculture exhibit, and our commitment to our community through programming and sponsorship.

In addition, Central Washington State Fair received nineteen industry awards from Western Fairs Association (WFA), ranging from media and marketing to agriculture and programming.

Totaling 25 awards, we are honored to be recognized by the Fair industry and are excited to share the results of this record-breaking award year!



2023 Agriculture Highlights

Agriculture Education is a top priority for the Central Washington State Fair. From the Agriculture Building to the Livestock Barns, new agriculture education programs were introduced in 2023 and longtime favorites returned.

New Programing to the Agriculture Building was the Award Winning "Perfect Plate" project winning us the prestigious Merrill Award for the first time in our Fair's history. 1,110 Yakima County 4th graders participated in depicting their ideal meals using state commodities they learned about in the lesson plan and supplies we provided.

The Featured Agriculture Exhibit

showcased "The Mighty Spud - Washington's Unsung Heroes". The exhibit displayed potatoes grown in Washington, as well as historical and cultural information. Other components of the exhibit included potatoes in grow bags, videos about harvesting, recipes, a potato dig bin, and the top 6 potato varieties grown in Washington State. Partnerships for creating this project included The Washington State Potato Commission, Bouchey Potatoes, and Christensen Fuels.



Valley Produce and Floral competitions showcased the green thumbs of hundreds of Yakima Valley gardeners from the smallest grape to the tallest sunflower!

Returning Favorites included the Granges, Community Organizations, and Future Farmers of America exhibits that were visually stunning while providing facts about agriculture and food production.

Livestock Barns held traditional livestock shows and some new competitions including mules and working ranch horses, a zebu cattle show, and a miniature donkey exhibit. A total of 2,870 entries were on display in the 8 livestock barns. One of the most popular areas continues to be the pig litters and rabbits allowing the public to experience them up close.

Expo Building continues to exhibit draft horses, mules and miniature horses/ponies. New to the exhibit were two draft horse foals born in the Spring of 2023. In addition, demonstrations were held daily in Wilco Arena showcasing the animals abilities and uses.

1118

individuals volunteered at this year's Fair donating 5,890 hours of their time.

5770

items were entered and displayed in the Modern Living Building and Ag Building. **\$20,000** was paid out in awards.

529

Youth showed 1,126 animals and received **\$15,593** In Cash Awards.

252

Future Farmers of America Participated in the FFA Livestock Judging Competitions.

364

Adults Showed 2,800 Animals and Received **\$79,817** in Cash Awards

Foundation

SID MORRISON AGRICULTURAL EDUCATION FUND KICKED-OFF IN 2023

Last June, the Central Washington Fair Association Foundation had the pleasure of honoring Sid Morrison with a “Roast and Toast”. It was an evening filled with laughter, camaraderie, and heart felt tribute to a true champion.

The highlight of the evening was the unveiling of the Sid Morrison Agricultural Education Fund, a new fundraising initiative to honor Sid’s legacy and his deep roots in the agricultural community.

Monies raised that evening provided the funds necessary for the Central Washington State Fair to launch two new educational programs during the 2023 Fair. Students from around the Valley had an opportunity to attend the Fair and learn firsthand the importance of Agriculture to our Valley.

LEGACY TREE

To celebrate and showcase the Sid Morrison Agricultural Education Fund to the community, a donor “Legacy Tree” has been created. This ever-blooming tree will grow leaves as donors continue to show their support for the Foundation’s agricultural education efforts. The Legacy Tree debuting at the 2024 Fair has seven levels of giving available and will be installed permanently outside the Fair’s iconic Agriculture Building for all to see. Don’t miss the opportunity to add your family’s “leaf” to the Legacy Tree.



Learn more about the Sid Morrison Agricultural
Education Fund at statefairpark.org

