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2019 Wisconsin Fairest of the Fairs



One hundred and sixty years ago at the Wisconsin State Fair, Abraham Lincoln began his speech addressing the Wisconsin State Agricultural Society by saying, **“Agricultural Fairs are becoming an institution of the country; they are useful in more ways than one; they bring us together, and thereby make us better acquainted, and better friends than we otherwise would be.”**

Throughout my reign as the 2019 Wisconsin Fairest of the Fairs, I can attest to Lincoln's words spoken at the Wisconsin State Fair, as my year has been marked in a special way by every single person whose path I have crossed on this journey. Differences between the 58 fairs I attended were plentiful, but what I found to be universal between them is their best facet - ALL of the people within them.

With each new person I met, came new ideas, backgrounds in agriculture, and reasons as to why they were visiting the Fair that day. What struck me most is each person's willingness to engage in conversation, sharing their memories of previous fairs and genuine excitement of their ties to agriculture. The interactions with each of these people touched me in ways that I could have never anticipated and make me excited to see how fairs will continue to make us better friends than we otherwise would be for the next one hundred and sixty years to come.

As I look back on my reign, I cannot help but smile as I remember all the people and moments who have touched my life forever, making 2019 the year of a lifetime.



June Dairy Breakfasts: My summer began with a celebration of dairy: grilled cheese, yogurt, milk, and cows during June Dairy Month!

Jefferson County Fair: Colin, a second-year hog exhibitor, took home the Grand Champion Market Hog title with his hog, Lincoln. Something tells me he is hooked on the swine project now! The Jefferson County Fair also hosted a Truck Pull, where the Jefferson County Sheriff MRAP took the first pull down the track.



St. Croix County Fair: St. Croix County marks the first (and last) place I competed in a cricket spitting competition. Check out the action shot!

As if cricket spitting wasn't exciting enough, Audrey, the 2018 St. Croix County Fairest of the Fair and I hit the hog show ring, in more formal attire than we are used to, as we competed in alumni swine showmanship. The proceeds of this alumni show went to funding a new swine barn at the St. Croix County Fairgrounds and was a huge success. Thank you, St. Croix County, for one last show!



Trempealeau County Fair: Baylee and McKenna, who are only six and two years old, are as passionate about agriculture and cattle as they come! The girls looked forward to showing "Apple Jack" in the Trempealeau County Fair's Little Britches show.





Blake's Prairie Junior Fair: The exhibitors were ready to cool off from the heat with their annual water fight! Parents of these exhibitors figure that this water fight has been a tradition at the Fair for at least 50 years. I have come to find that priceless memories such as this one are a common occurrence at Fairs across Wisconsin.

Racine County Fair: After the crowning of the Racine County Fairest of the Fair and an introduction at the truck pull, Fair royalty got to end the day in the BEST way possible, and on my childhood favorite ride at the Fair: the Cliff Hanger!



Monroe County Fair: I loved receiving a tour of the grounds from Simon, an incredibly wise and welcoming Fair Board member. Our tour paused for a moment as we stopped by the sheep show, where I met siblings Brayden and Peyton.

Brayden and Peyton did an impressive job showing their market lambs. When asked what he wants to be when he grows up, Brayden says his goal is to be a farmer one day. I am so proud of them both!

Wisconsin State Fair: After enjoying my “fair” share of County Fairs throughout June and July, it was finally time for the *Best 11 Days of Summer* at the Wisconsin State Fair! State Fair was the highlight of my summer and welcomed a record-setting number of visitors in celebration of Wisconsin agriculture, food, and fun.

Day 1 began bright and early with an interview on Fox 6 of Milwaukee, pinning flowers on Wisconsin dignitaries, a ribbon cutting ceremony for the new Dairy Lane exhibit, and an interview with Fox 11 of Green Bay. This amazing day was topped off with the All for One Swine Show for exhibitors with intellectual disabilities that evening.

Day 2 brought a WonderFair sight as I traveled the grounds and introduced events. One of my favorite stops was the K-9 Sports Arena, where the Dock Diving Competition is always a guaranteed splash! Another Day 2 favorite included greeting fairgoers on the tram as they entered and exited the fairgrounds. The day ended with a gorgeous view atop the winning six-horse Clydesdale hitch.

Day 3 was full of floral, as I began the day by helping create floral butterflies with fairgoers and co-emceeding a floral challenge in Grand Champion Hall. The floral challenge was full of energy and creativity, as four contestants battled out the creation of floral arrangements in less than two hours. The day ended with the first-ever All for One Goat Show at the Wisconsin State Fair.

Day 4 was a roarin’ fun day, sporting black and gold for UW-Milwaukee Day! I helped judge the UW-Milwaukee Roar-Like-A-Panther contest and had my hand in filling (and eating) a cream puff or two at the Cream Puff Pavilion.

Day 5 consisted of a few more crowns present at the fairgrounds, as it marked “Fairest Reunion Day.” I had the honor of showing current and last year’s County Fairests from all corners of the state around the Wisconsin State Fair. Some highlights included a sweet beginning to the day with a cream puff for breakfast, getting a birds-eye view of the Fair Park from the SkyGlider, experiencing the Lambeau Field Live exhibit, and taking part in the daily parade with other Fairests.

Day 6 included some of the most memorable moments of mine at State Fair. It was a privilege to start the day by addressing those honored at the Century and Sesquicentennial Farm Breakfast. The pride exuded by farmers whose farms have been in existence for 100 and 150 years is a feeling I’ll cherish forever. After the breakfast, I joined in festivities as the Wisconsin State Fair took a slice of fun, music, and games (and a few cream puffs) from State Fair to Children’s Hospital of Wisconsin. The day ended at the Governor’s Blue Ribbon Meat Products Auction.

Day 7 made my taste buds happy, as it was the day of the Sporkies Food Competition Finals! This was my first time in attendance at this mouth-watering competition, and the five (!) Buffalo Chicken Cheese Curd Tacos I consumed as a result surely did not disappoint. The night ended with the Governor’s Blue Ribbon Livestock Auction, which raised \$255,850 this year.

Day 8 I tested my love of State Fair cream puffs in the Celebrity Cream Puff Eating Contest! I didn't take home the Champion Cream Puff Trophy, but I did take home a very full stomach. I also stopped by WE Energies Energy Park to play a fun game of Power! Play! Pandemonium! which allows participants to have competitive fun while learning about electrical safety. I capped off the day at the Blue Ribbon Dairy Products Auction.

Day 9 I stopped by the Milking Parlor to observe a Milking Demonstration by the 72nd Alice in Dairyland, Abigail Martin. The Belgian Horse Show that night was a gorgeous sight!

Day 10 was quite the ride, as Abigail and I took a trip to Spin City and hopped on some of our favorite rides. We ended the night in the grandest way by speaking at the Wisconsin Holstein Futurity Show.

Day 11 came far too quickly, but was filled with a few of my favorites from the previous ten days: rides with Lt. Governor Barnes, a trip to the Cream Puff Pavilion with Abigail, and one last time on the Associated Bank Amphitheater stage for the Junior Amateur Talent Competition.



Day 1: Greeting Governor Tony Evers, First Lady Kathy Evers, and Lt. Governor Barnes prior to Opening Ceremonies.



Day 2: Chatting with fairgoers as they entered and exited the Fair Park on the tram. As I asked what their favorite part of the Fair was, unsurprisingly, many answers included food and animals!



Day 3: Handing out ribbons at the very first All for One Goat Show at the Wisconsin State Fair.



Day 4: Celebrating UW-Milwaukee Day by sporting the black and gold.



Day 5: On Fairest Reunion Day, there were a few more crowns at the Fair Park than normal.



Day 6: Cheering on our hogs at the "Pig Races" that were brought to Children's Hospital of the Wisconsin.



Day 7: Celebrating the Buffalo Chicken Cheese Curd Tacos Sporkie win and addressing the crowd before the Governor's Blue Ribbon Livestock Auction.



Day 8: The Celebrity Cream Puff Eating Competition – featured as a chronology. Pictured first: an innocent, confident participant. Second: a woman who is very worried about the competition. Third: a good sport with a very full stomach.



Day 9: Passing out string cheese at the conclusion of the daily Milking Demonstration by the 72nd Alice in Dairyland, Abigail Martin.



Day 11: Concluding the Best 11 Days of Summer on a “high” note, atop rides with Lt. Governor Barnes.



Day 10: A glamorous night was had at the Wisconsin Holstein Futurity Show.



Brown County Fair: It was a blast being welcomed home by Brown County. I was not only “home” in De Pere, Wisconsin, but also “home” in the swine show ring, the sheep barn, and with the people from CP. CP is a day services facility for folks with disabilities and a former workplace of mine. On their outing to the Brown County Fair, some of my favorite teens spent a day exploring the fairgrounds with Olivia, the Brown County Fairest of the Fair, and I.

My heart swelled with pride when talking to the current staff from CP, who said visiting the Fair was their favorite outing of the summer – all because of how kind and accommodating the people of the Brown County Fair were to them and their needs.

Warrens Cranberry Festival: I loved celebrating the Fall and the beginning of the Cranberry Harvest Season at Warrens Cranberry Festival!

Warrens, Wisconsin is a town with a population of 252, yet it welcomes over 150,000 people for its three-day Cranberry Festival. It is a must-see event, and also serves as a great way to learn more about our state’s official fruit.



As I reflect on this chapter as the Wisconsin Fairest of the Fairs, I could not feel more thankful for everyone who has played a role in making 2019 unforgettable.

After traveling over 11,000 miles and visiting 58 Wisconsin Fairs, there is no doubt that there is a lot to love about every single one of them. Whether you are a ride fanatic, you love deep fried food on a stick, or you simply enjoy connecting with Wisconsin Agriculture, there truly is something for everyone at the Fair. I cannot think of a better event to connect us ALL.

One hundred and sixty years ago, Abe Lincoln was spot on when he stated that Wisconsin Fairs bring us together, make us better acquainted, and help us become “better friends than we otherwise would be.” Wisconsin Fairs provide the unique opportunity for strangers to become friends, friends to become family, and neighbors to become a community.

So I encourage you, the next time you’re at a Fair and every time after that, take a moment to greet a stranger. Who knows, they could be your neighbor! If you’re an animal showman, take a moment to chat with fairgoers and impart knowledge on what it means to be an owner of livestock. No matter your age or background, challenge yourself to learn something new, from someone new, about a topic you wish you knew more about!

Take the photo, make the friend, go on the ride, eat the deep-fried food on a stick, learn new things, and always remember: Wisconsin Fairs are for ALL.