

# 44th Annual **COLUMBUS COUNTY**



# *FAIR*

A special publication of  
**The News Reporter**

**October 8–13, 2024**

# What to expect at the 2024 fair

The Columbus County Agriculture Fair Board of Directors is pleased to announce the 44th annual Columbus County Agriculture Fair, sponsored by Brunswick Electric Membership Corporation.

As part of our agricultural history, in 2024 we are honoring the sweet potato. This crop not only has agricultural importance to our county but is culturally significant. The North Carolina Yam Festival will be celebrated Saturday, Oct. 26, in the Town of Tabor City, but don't wait until then — come see how we spotlight local sweet potatoes at the fair.

Fair festivities will begin at 4 p.m. on Monday, Oct. 7, with our annual fair parade in downtown Whiteville. Bruce Lowery, affectionately known as "Flimsy the Clown," will serve as this year's parade marshal!

We continue to be proud of our educational tobacco barn constructed in time for the 2023 fair by Bill Worley & Sons, Inc. In its first season the barn quickly became a great space for people to gather and reminisce or just take a break while enjoying the sights and sounds of the fair!

This year the fair board will dedicate and name the educational barn. Stay tuned in the coming days to hear more about this recognition.

More than ever, this year we want to celebrate all the great things about Columbus County, from our agriculture to our people!

In that spirit, we are pleased to announce the return of two popular events from years past and a totally new attraction that'll have young and old "hooked." Look what we've got planned:

- On Tuesday, a crowd favorite will return when surrounding schools will participate in a cheerleading competition at the Joe Jacobs Track.

- We are also pleased to announce the re-

turn of the Columbus County Agriculture Fair Pageant the night of Saturday, Oct. 12. It has been years since a Miss Columbus County Fair has been crowned, but we are excited to see the pageant's return!

- Want to go fishing at the fair? This year we have the First Bite Fishing Tanks attraction where anyone can come try their hand or perfect their skills at fishing.

We haven't forgotten these annual events, either:

- Our livestock show returns at 6 p.m. on Tuesday, Oct. 8. The fair board dedicated this year's fairbook to Ben Harrelson, who has dedicated decades to showcasing the livestock industry and its importance to our county. Ben has never sought recognition for his contributions, and we are honored to be able to recognize his hard work and dedication.

- Our annual First Responders' Tug-Of-War is planned for Wednesday, Oct. 9. We can't wait to see which agency takes home the trophy this year.

- BEMC linemen will conduct a pole climbing safety demonstration at the demolition track Thursday at 7 p.m.

- Demolition derby on Friday and Saturday nights is always a huge event. There has been a lot of work done on the Joe Jacobs Track, and we are pleased to announce a brand-new sound system to make everyone's experience even better!

- We've planned a great lineup of stage entertainment. Check out the schedule in this guide.

- And, of course, Dreamland Amusements will once again offer great rides and midway entertainment. Dreamland is even offering a discount this year for purchasing your arm-bands early and online before the fair begins!

- Come support our businesses and services in our exhibition building.



**Jess Hill, president of the fair's board of directors, is shown with his family. Standing are Audrey, Eli and Anna Kay. Seated are Jessica, Earl and Jess Hill.**

- Our Evelyn Rabon Building will display local crops, crafts and more.

#### Keep up with fair news

Check out our newly designed website where you can view our 2024 Fairbook online. For fair week updates, go to [NRcolumbus.com](http://NRcolumbus.com) and subscribe to the free Daily Briefing e-mail newsletter.

Thank you for your support of

your fair, the only county fair in the Cape Fear region!

We humbly ask you to come out and support all the things that make Columbus County a great place to live. May God bless you and your family; we hope to see everyone at this year's fair!

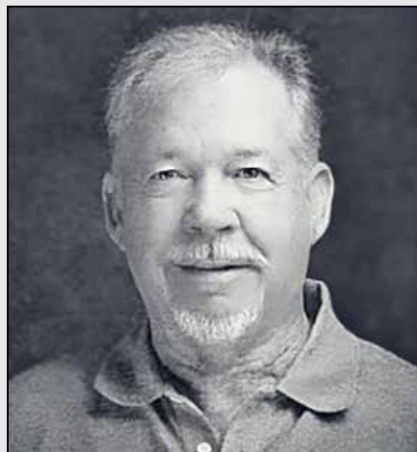
**Jess Hill**

*President, Columbus County Agriculture Fair, Inc.*

## Fair board honors Harrelson's livestock leadership and legacy

The Columbus County Agriculture Fair was founded on the principles of supporting law enforcement while celebrating the importance of all things agriculture in Columbus County. The livestock industry is a big part of our agricultural heritage and its future, not only in Columbus County but throughout North Carolina.

Ben Harrelson has dedicated decades to showcasing this important industry every year at the Columbus County Agriculture Fair. For many years, Ben Harrelson was one of several important individuals that helped make our livestock shows such an important part of this fair. We were so honored to start these shows back, building upon the legacy that he helped to create. He has also been a champion of



**Ben Harrelson**

the Ole Macdonald Farm building, where showing chickens is another one of his passions. His leadership in these important areas has not only been a vital component of our fair but also helped educate future generations about their importance in our county.

Ben Harrelson has spent decades dedicated to our fair, fostering its future and helping to ensure its success. Never one to want recognition, he's always demonstrated his leadership through his commitment and hard work. The Columbus County Agriculture Fair is proud to dedicate the 2024 Columbus County Agriculture Fairbook to Ben Harrelson.

— Edited material from Columbus County Agriculture Fair



**Tuesday, Oct. 8**

4 p.m. Gates Open  
 5 p.m. Flag Raising Ceremony  
 5:30 p.m. Decorated Pumpkin & Hat Contest  
 6 p.m. Spelling Bee (Grades 3-5)  
 6:30 p.m. Cheerleading Competition (Derby Track)  
 6:30 p.m. Livestock Show & Exhibit  
 Livestock Building  
 Nightly Dreamland Amusements

**Wednesday, Oct. 9  
Special Friends' Day**

11 a.m.-1 p.m. Special Friends  
 4 p.m. Gates Open  
 5:30 p.m. Simply Dance  
 6 p.m. Tug of War (Derby Track)  
 6:30 Spelling Bee (Grades 6-8)  
 Nightly Dreamland Amusements

# Schedule

**Thursday, Oct. 10  
Kindergarten Day**

9 a.m.-until Kindergarten Day  
 4 p.m. Gates Open  
 5 p.m., Waccamaw Siouan Dancers  
 6 p.m. Talent Showcase - Southside Dance Studio  
 7 p.m. Talent Showcase - Amy's Academy of Dance Arts  
 7 p.m. BEMC Pole Top Rescue Demonstration at Demo Derby Track  
 Nightly Dreamland Amusements

**Friday, Oct. 11  
Senior Citizens' Day**

1-4 p.m. Senior Citizens' Day (60 and older)  
 4 p.m. Gates Open  
 5 p.m. Carolina Extreme Karate  
 6 p.m. Diaper Derby  
 6:30 p.m. Flimsy the Clown  
 7 p.m. Children's Tractor Pull (Barn)  
 7 p.m. Demolition Derby at Demo Derby Track  
 8 p.m. Randy Hawse & True South Band  
 Nightly Dreamland Amusements

**Saturday, Oct. 12**

10 a.m. Pageant Contestant Rehearsal  
 1 p.m. Gates Open  
 2 p.m. Whiteville City Schools Talent Showcase  
 3 p.m. Columbus County Schools Talent Showcase  
 4:30 p.m. Randy Pinyan Band  
 6 p.m. Fair Pageant (with Hidden Language Performance)  
 7 p.m. Demolition Derby at Demo Derby Track  
 Nightly Dreamland Amusements

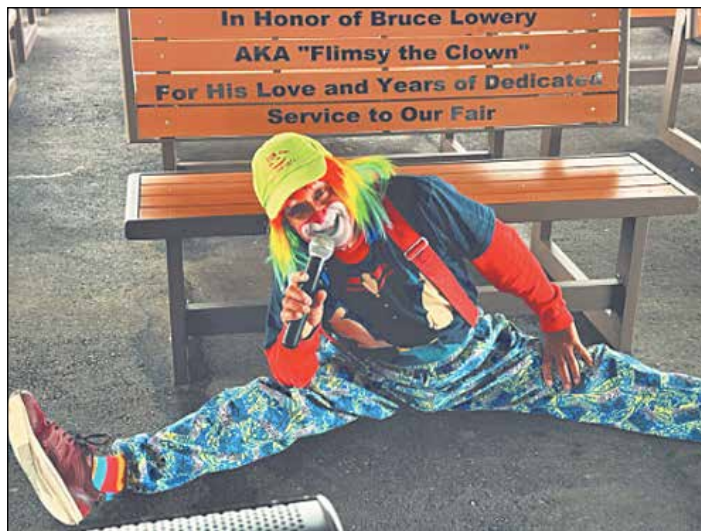
**Sunday, Oct. 13  
\$60 Carload Sunday**

1 p.m. Gates Open  
 3 p.m. Bristol Creek Church, Dothan - Charlie Manning - Praise and Worship  
 Dreamland Amusements

## Flimsy the Clown is 2024 fair parade marshal

It has often been said that the greatest thing about being a clown is not only making people smile but more importantly spreading joy to everyone around and showing them that they are loved. For years at the Columbus County Agriculture Fair, we have been honored to have someone in our midst that spends countless hours spreading this message of joy and love to all around him.

Whether he's dancing with children and teachers on kindergarten day, or putting smiles on everyone's faces during special friends' day, or just walking around the fair, Flimsy the Clown has made the Columbus

**"Flimsy the Clown"**

County fairgrounds a special place and left an indelible mark on so many individuals.

Flimsy has a deep calling for his fellow man, a calling of spreading love and joy. Simply put, for the thousands of people who Flimsy the Clown has made smile and laugh, he is

their friend, and he has left a special place in their heart! Flimsy will always have a special place in our hearts as well, and the Columbus County Agriculture Fair is proud to call him our friend.

Therefore, the Columbus County Agriculture Fair is proud to announce Flimsy the Clown, a.k.a. Bruce Lowery, as the 2024 Co-

lumbus County Agriculture Fair Parade Marshal. We know that we are giving him an opportunity to truly dance in the streets, and we can't wait to see the smiles and the joy he will bring.

— Edited material from Columbus County Agriculture Fair

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# State group gives Ann Ferguson the Holmes-McBride Award

Surrounded by fellow board members, friends and family, Fair Board President Jess Hill was honored to present to Ann Ferguson the Holmes-McBride Award at the North Carolina Association of Agriculture Fairs meeting in Raleigh on Jan. 7, 2024. The Holmes-McBride award is the highest honor anyone can receive from the North Carolina Association of Agriculture Fairs. It is presented to an individual who has made distinguished achievements in, or contributions to, the fair industry.

Ferguson, regarded as the matriarch of the Columbus County Agriculture Fair, has served our fair in various capacities for over 42 years. As the wife of the late Jimmy Ferguson, past president of the Columbus County Agriculture Fair and past president of the North Carolina Association of Agriculture Fairs, she has literally and figuratively been married to the fair! Her husband received the Holmes-McBride Award in 2004.

Our motto is "It's A Family A-Fair" and the Ferguson family continues to carry on this tradition. Susan Ferguson, daughter of Jimmy and Ann Ferguson, is a board member along with her mother.

We are proud of Ann Ferguson's many years of service and pleased to see her receive the Holmes-McBride Award.

— Edited material from Columbus County Agriculture Fair



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# Fair licensed, rides inspected

The Columbus County Agriculture Fair is approved and licensed by the N.C. Department of Agriculture and is a member of the N.C. Association of Agriculture Fairs and International Association of Fairs and Expositions.

Midway rides provided by Dreamland Amusements are inspected by the N.C. Department of Labor.

The Columbus County Agriculture Fair began in 1980, 50 years after the last County Fair had been held in Columbus County. It was a project of the Columbus County Law Enforcement Officers Association. The first fair was completely dependent upon big circus tents, but as time passed nice buildings were built to house the commercial and educational booths, livestock barn and food stand. In more recent years an old building was remodeled to serve as the fair's office building.

Early on, the fair board asked the public to help give the fair a suitable motto, and a contest was held. The fair board liked "It's A Family A-Fair," so that became the motto.

Several years ago the fair called on the public again to choose a name for the fair's mascot, a gigantic fiberglass rooster who stood sentinel on the fairgrounds. "Fearless Fair-ley" was the name chosen by the fair board.



## Dreamland provides rides for family fun

Dreamland Amusements has been providing exciting rides for children and adults for the Columbus County Fair for many years, and their rides spend winters right here in Columbus County. The company has a 15-acre winter headquarters in downtown Delco, 15 miles west of Wilmington, where the equipment is stored until spring.

The rides then go on the road, traveling from New Hampshire to Miami, Fla.,

supplying rides, games and food stands for county and state fairs and also playing concert dates. The equipment has been featured in TV ads, at many private parties, corporate rentals and concert dates. The company supplies silent generators, benches and covered seating areas. At many fairs Dreamland Amusements does an extensive landscaping package. The company markets its events through cable TV, radio, coupon distribution as well as a custom Dreamland Amusements mailer designed especially for its demographics.

When their event has ended, the Dreamlands staff does a thorough cleanup of the grounds, leaving them as they found them.



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# 36th annual parade offers cash prizes

Cash prizes will again be given for the top units in the Columbus County Agriculture Fair Parade, scheduled for Monday, Oct. 7.

Prize categories are live-stock, row crops, "other," and Best Dressed Farm Animal. Each first-place winner will receive \$50.

To participate in the parade, e-mail Fair457@gmail.com. Put "parade information" in the subject line. The parade will begin at 4 p.m. after lining up at 3 p.m. along Lee Street in Whiteville.

This will be the fair's 36th annual parade. Judges' decisions are final.



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# Sweet potatoes take center stage at 2024 fair

The Columbus County Agricultural Fair celebrates the importance of agriculture, not only economically but also in our everyday lives. Last year, we celebrated the strawberry, including its agricultural history and the impact it has had on the town of Chadbourn. North Carolina's oldest agricultural festival is the North Carolina Strawberry Festival, celebrated annually the first week in May.

This year we are proud to celebrate the North Carolina Yam Festival in the Town of Tabor City and the benefits it has had over the years. Although yams are not actually grown in North Carolina, the Yam Festival began in 1948 celebrating the sweet potato as Tater Days, later becoming the Carolina Yam Festival. After a brief hiatus, the festival began again in 1985 as the North Carolina Yam Festival after a grant from the State of North Carolina. Every




fourth week in October, the North Carolina Yam Festival is celebrated in the town of Tabor City. This year, we hope everyone attends the Town of Tabor City as they celebrate the 53rd cumulative year of the North Carolina Yam Festival.

— Edited material from Columbus County Agriculture Fair, Inc.

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# Demolition Derby is Friday, Saturday nights



One of the most popular and exciting events at the Columbus County Agriculture Fair is the Demolition Derby, held each year on Friday and Saturday nights, beginning at 7 p.m.

Registration will be from 4 to 6:30 p.m. at the track, and there are no entry fees. There are four classes of vehicles, 4-cylinder class (small car), 6-cylinder class (up to 3,500 lbs.), 8-cylinder class (3,501 lbs. & up ) and pro class (any cylinder).

## 4-Cylinder Class, 6-Cylinder Class & 8-Cylinder Class rules

1. Any stock hard top automobile or station wagon is allowed.

2. Safety belts and safety

helmets with goggles or shield are required.

3. All glass must be removed except windshield. If windshield is removed a center bar is required.

4. All decorative chrome must be removed, but door handles may be left on.

5. Gas tanks are to be inside of car, six gallon tanks (plastic or metal). Tanks must be properly secured and covered. Original tanks must have holes punched in them and flushed clear of gas, or be removed from car.

6. No special bumpers, trailer hitches, reinforcements or added weight are allowed on any part of the vehicle. \*\*Bumper shocks can be removed and the bumper welded\*\*.

7. Doors should be weld-



Demo Derby action begins at 7 p.m. Friday and Saturday nights.

ed or chained. If welded, must be in 4-inch welds.

8. Trunks should be chained shut or welded by 4-inch welds. Hoods can use 5/8-inch bolt or be chained. Tailgates of wagons should be chained or welded so as not to open during heat.

9. All sun visors, windshield blades, and headliners must be removed.

10. Fenders may be cut for wheel clearance only.

11. Batteries should be

secured inside vehicle and covered with tarp or heavy material to prevent explosion.

12. No solid white cars accepted! Cars may be decorated in any manner as long as it is in good taste. Driver's door only should be painted white for derby number to be applied at registration. Numbers are issued on first-come-first-serve basis.

13. Tires must be filled

with air only.

14. Radiators must remain in its original position.

15. Drivers: Do not leave your vehicle unless instructed to do so by derby flagman! Leaving the vehicle is grounds for disqualification. Stay with your car until it has been removed from the track.

16. Any car catching fire that stops the event is automatically disqualified for that heat.

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17. All cars must immediately stop at the sound of horn, light or flagman.  
18. All hoods and trunks must have a 12" in diameter hole cut for safety.

19. No larger than 3/4 threaded bolts for chassis & body bolts.

For more information:  
Columbus County Agriculture Fair, Inc. (910) 642-7585 • or (910) 840-5566  
Info@columbuscounty-fair.com.

### Demo Derby Pro Class Rules

1. Any stock hard top automobile or station wagon is allowed.

2. Safety belts and safety helmets with goggles or shield are required.

3. All glass must be removed except windshield. If windshield is removed a center bar is required.

4. All decorative chrome, must be removed, but door handles may be left on.

5. Gas tanks are to be inside of car, six gallon tanks (plastic or metal). Tanks must be properly secured and covered.

Original tanks must have holes punched in them and flushed clear of gas, or must be removed from car.

6. No special bumpers, trailer hitches, reinforcements or added weight are allowed on any part of the vehicle. \*\*Bumper shocks can be removed and the bumper welded\*\*.

7. Doors should be welded or chained, if welded must be in 4" welds.

8. Trunks should be chained shut or welded by 4" welds. Hoods can use 5/8 inch bolt or be chained. Tailgates of wagons should be chained or welded so as not to open during heat.

9. All sun visors, windshield blades, and headliners must be removed.

10. Fenders may be cut for wheel clearance only. Height of vehicle must not be over 24" from bottom of bumper to ground.

11. Batteries should be secured inside vehicle and covered with tarp or heavy material to prevent explosion.

12. No solid white cars

accepted! Cars may be decorated in any manner as long as it is in good taste. Driver's door only should be painted white for derby number to be applied at registration. Numbers are issued on a first-come-first-serve basis.

13. Any size tires, four-point role cage/bars are acceptable. No hump plates or kickers!

14. Radiators must remain in its original position.

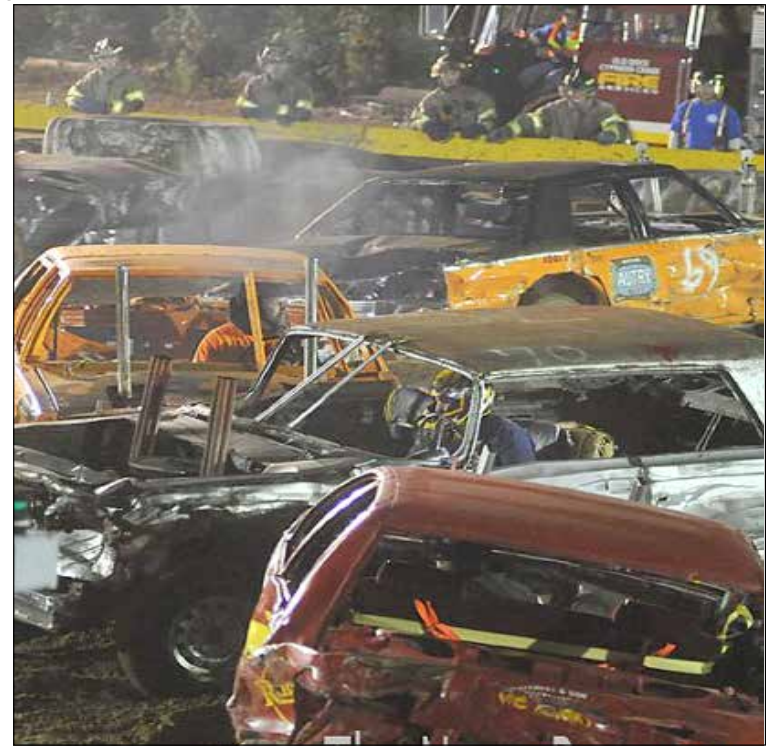
15. Drivers: Do not leave vehicle unless instructed to do so by derby flagman! Leaving vehicle is grounds for disqualification. Stay with car until it has been removed from the track.

16. Any car catching fire that stops the event is automatically disqualified for that heat.

17. All cars must immediately stop at the sound of horn, light or flagman.

18. All hoods & trunks must have a 12" diameter hole cut for safety.

19. No larger than 3/4 threaded bolts for chassis & body bolts.



One of the County Fair's most exciting events is the demolition derby, held Friday and Saturday nights on the track at the back on the midway. An entry fee is charged in addition to the general gate admission. Registration is from 4-6:30 p.m. and the derby starts at 7 p.m.

**Ladies' Powder Puff**  
Ladies' Powder Puff  
Derby is Saturday night

only. (must have six cars).  
-Content provided by Columbus County Agriculture Fair

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# Fair's final day is Carload Sunday

Once again, fair-goers can pack a vehicle with friends and family and pay a flat rate per carload. And that includes armbands allowing unlimited rides.

The cost is \$60 per carload on Sunday, Oct. 13, only. Gates open at 1 p.m.

No buses are allowed. Upon entering fairgrounds parking, each driver will receive a number representing the number of people in their vehicle.

When going through the gate, the driver

will show their number, and each person in the group will receive entrance into the fair, including a ride band.

— *Edited material from Columbus County Agriculture Fair, Inc.*



*Have Fun at the Columbus County Fair*



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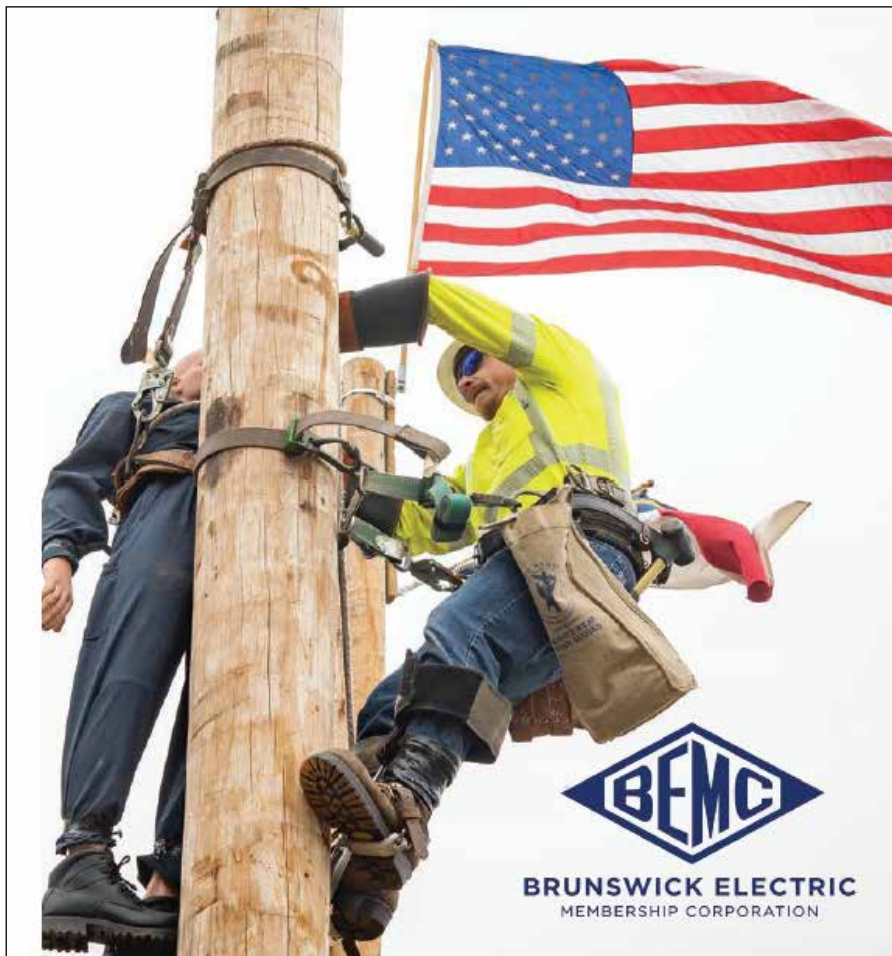
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Touchstone Energy's balloon is at the fair every year, as the network is a corporate sponsor along with Brunswick Electric Membership Corporation.

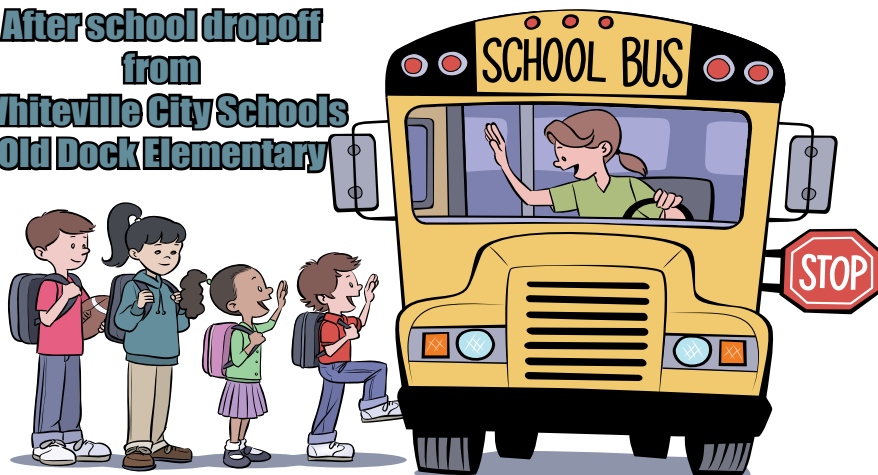
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Randy Hawse & True South will perform Friday at 8 p.m.

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# County fair team wins awards in five statewide categories

By **DIANA MATTHEWS**  
dianamatthews@nrcolumbus.com

Representatives of the Columbus County Agriculture Fair accepted five awards at the N.C. Association of Agricultural Fairs Convention Banquet, held Jan. 6 in Cary.

Jess Hill, fair board president, said he and his fellow fair workers had been “blessed” to win the association’s Image Award, Innovation Award, Youth Award and Agriculture Award.

Most important among the recognitions, Hill said, was that, “The matriarch of our fair, Mrs. Ann Ferguson, won the most prestigious award for an individual to receive, the 2023 Holmes-McBride Humanitarian Award for her years of dedicated service to the fair industry.”

## What the awards mean

The Image Award “is the largest award a fair can receive” and “encompasses the totality of the fair,” Hill said, over “a multitude of categories.”

Hill said the Columbus County Agriculture Fair had won the Image Award twice in the past. He thought the award committee had been impressed by the fair’s recent introduction of new events and revival of others such as the livestock show, first responders’ tug-of-war and Brunswick Electric Membership Corporation’s pole-climbing safety demonstration.

However, Hill said, “the defining factor” in winning the Image Award was

“the hard work and collaboration of countless volunteers.”

The Innovation Award recognizes the creation of “something different to make the fair better,” in this case the fairgrounds’ new educational tobacco barn, Hill said.

Board Member Ethan Jordan showed his commitment to the fair’s future by working “at the forefront of a great team of young people” putting on the livestock and pig shows and caring for animals all week, Hill said. The fair’s many displays showing the importance of agriculture won it this year’s Agriculture Award, he said.

## ‘Married to’ the fair

In nominating Ann Pugh Ferguson of Chadbourn for the Holmes McBride Humanitarian Award, Hill wrote that she “has been an instrumental ‘saw dust soldier’ for decades,” making sure that the fair “would not only continue but thrive.”

Hill praised Ferguson for faithfully supporting the involvement of her late husband, Jimmy Ferguson, longtime president of the fair and past recipient of the humanitarian award. Hill said that Jimmy Ferguson’s “wing woman, his companion and wife” deserved her share of credit for the family’s legacy of “leadership, dedication and commitment” to the fair.

Calling Ann Ferguson the “matriarch” of Columbus County’s fair, Hill said that, “She has literally and figura-

*Continued on page 17*



CONTRIBUTED PHOTO FROM JESS HILL

Columbus County Agriculture Fair leaders hold plaques and certificates awarded Jan. 6 during the annual N.C. Association of Agricultural Fairs Convention in Cary. Left to right are Fair Board Member Ethan Jordan with the Youth Award, Board President Jess Hill with the Image Award, Board Member Ann Ferguson with the Holmes McBride Humanitarian Award, Vice-President Sarah Gore with the Innovation Award and Advisory Board Member Susan Ferguson with the Agriculture Award.

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The fair board and some of the other volunteers gather next to the entrance gate of the fairgrounds in 2023.

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# RANDY PINYAN BAND



Randy Pinyan Band will perform Saturday at 4:30 p.m.

## Awards

*Continued from page 15*

tively been married to [the fair],” and now “continues this service for the love of her community,” allowing another generation to enjoy the fair her husband loved.

Ferguson, a fair board member, produces the annual fair book and takes responsibility for indoor and

outdoor vending spaces and rentals. Hill called her “our goodwill ambassador” for her dedication to handling concerns throughout the fair week to keep things running smoothly and give fair-goers “the best time.”

Hill said he and his fellow fair leaders “want to thank the citizens of Columbus County, all our patrons and the countless volunteers and friends of the fair.”



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# A race that moves at a crawl

The Columbus County Agriculture Fair Diaper Derby will be held on the stage at 6 p.m. Friday, Oct. 11. Entries must be between 6 and 12 months old and not walking. Only one adult may accompany the baby at each end of the race track. At no time

may a parent or guardian enter the boundaries of the racetrack.

Babies will crawl the length of the race track. If no baby has completed the race within three minutes, the baby closest to the finish line will be declared the win-

ner. Trophies will be given to the 1st, 2nd and 3rd place winners.

Contestants must register prior to the race near the main stage.

—Content provided by Columbus County Agriculture Fair



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# Photography, art contests open to ages 16 and older

## Photography

1. Exhibit open to all permanent residents of Columbus County above the age of 16 years.

2. Entries are limited to (1) per division for each photographer and must have been taken in the last 24 months.

3. All photos must be framed or matted complete with an attached wire and ready for hanging.

4. Picture dimensions must not exceed 16"x 20."

5. Entries will be accepted on the Saturday prior to the opening of the fair from 1 p.m. – 5 p.m. at the Evelyn Rabon Building.

6. All work must be properly identified with an official entry blank on the back upper right corner.

7. The Columbus County Agriculture Fair will not be responsible for loss or damage to photographs, but will attempt to prevent any loss or damage that might occur.

8. The committee reserves the right to reject any entry upon their discretion. The committee's ruling is final.

9. Photos must be picked up on Monday following the close of the fair from 9 a.m. – 5 p.m. at the Evelyn Rabon Building.

10. One (1) piece of artwork from the total show will be judged as "Best in Show" and receive an additional cash prize of \$50.

## Photography Divisions

A 1 Portraits .....\$20 — \$10  
B 1 Pets and Animals \$20 — \$10  
C 1 Sports .....\$20 — \$10  
E 1 Flowers .....\$20 — \$10  
F 1 Special Effects .....\$20 — \$10  
F 1 Still Life .....\$20 — \$10  
F 1 Photo Collage .....\$20 — \$10

## Art

1. Exhibit open to all permanent residents of Columbus County above the age of 16 years.

2. Entries are limited to (1) per division for each artist and must have been painted in the last 24 months.

3. All artwork must be framed or matted complete with an attached wire and ready for hanging.



4. Picture dimensions must not exceed 16"x 20."

5. Entries will be accepted on Saturday prior to opening of the fair, from 1–5 p.m. at the Evelyn Rabon Building.

6. All work must be properly identified with an official entry blank on the back upper right corner.

7. The Columbus County Agriculture Fair will not be responsible for loss or damage to artwork, but will attempt to prevent any loss or damage that might occur.

8. The committee reserves the right to reject any entry upon their discretion. The committee's ruling is final.

9. Artwork must be picked up on Monday following the close of the fair from 9

a.m. to 5 p.m. at the Evelyn Rabon Building.

10. One (1) piece of artwork from the total show will be judged as "Best in Show" and receive an additional cash prize of \$50.

## Art Divisions

A 1 Acrylics .....\$35 — \$15  
B 1 Water Colors.....\$35 — \$15  
C 1 Drawings .....\$35 — \$15  
E 1 Pottery, Sculpture and 3D .....\$35 — \$15  
F 1 Mixed Media.....\$35 — \$15

— Content provided by  
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# How to enter exhibits at the Columbus County Agriculture Fair

## Chance to win money, ribbons

1. Exhibitors' entries will be accepted for registration at the Evelyn Rabon Building on Friday from noon-4 p.m. and on Saturday before the fair, from 10-4 p.m. No other entries will be accepted after 4 p.m. on Saturday. Cakes will be accepted Monday at 9 a.m. Judging will be done on Monday.

2. All entries for the Old Macdonald Farm will be accepted on the Monday of the fair week from 8 a.m. to noon, dependent on the availability of space. All poultry entries must be from NC. Poultry cannot cross state lines.

3. All articles must have been prepared, made or grown by the exhibitor within the last 12 months.

4. All entries must be registered with the clerks in charge of registration at the Exhibit Building. All exhibits on display

must remain in the Exhibit Building throughout the fair week. Articles may be reclaimed by the owner (ticket holder) following the fair on Monday from 9 a.m.-5 p.m. Any article removed from the Exhibit Building before Monday will forfeit any cash prize awarded to said article.

5. Exhibits will not be accepted by mail or public transportation.

6. Exhibitors must see to the proper delivery of any article or livestock on the grounds and the proper care to the latter, as no charge for transportation of drayage will be paid by the fair.

7. All entries will be numbered and recorded in the book of entry of the proper department. Entry tags will be issued, bearing entry number and exhibit number - tag to be attached to the exhibit and the stub

retained by the exhibitor and presented on Monday when the exhibit is called for. These claim checks are your proof that you have entered all your exhibits as required. There will be categories in which there may be a youth and adult entry. The designation "Y" will be added to the letter category for youth.

8. Any and all articles judged by the registrar to be obnoxious or repulsive in character will be forbidden entry, or, if entered without being fully known, shall be removed at once.

9. The right is reserved to place an exhibit in its proper class if it has been incorrectly entered.

10. All entries should be for the first premium of the premium number, under which they are entered. Failing to take the first, entries shall compete for the second, if second

is offered, but shall not be awarded more than one premium under the same number.

11. No article or animal will be entitled to space until the proper entry has been made. Space is limited. (All entries will be accepted in order of receipt until all available space is filled. In any case all entries must be received by the date specified under each department and when all space is filled, the management reserves the right to refuse entries, even if received before the specified date.

12. The management reserves the right to withhold premiums in any case in which it shall appear to them that the regulations have not been complied with, or that fraud has been practiced. Anyone wanting to enter a complaint should do so in writing, no later

than noon Tuesday.

13. Should any person misrepresent his/her exhibit and a premium be awarded upon it, such premium will be withheld by the management.

14. Payment of premiums awarded: Premiums will be paid by check at the end of the fair week. All checks are void after Nov. 15. Individuals assume the responsibility of claiming their checks at the exhibit building between 9 a.m. and 5 p.m. Monday when exhibits are picked up.

15. All articles shall have been grown, made or prepared by the exhibitor unless otherwise specified in the rules.

16. All articles which are the product of the soil must be entered in the name of the producer. Those showing handiwork or skill must be entered in the name of the one whose

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skill they represent. Such may be individuals, firms or factories. Failure to comply with this rule will bar violators from competing for any premiums whatsoever and render him/her and his/her exhibits liable for expulsion from the grounds.

17. When an individual exhibit made from a farm wins first premium, an exhibit of the same kind from the same farm cannot win the second or third premium. Example: a farm is awarded first prize for corn. That same farm cannot win second or third prizes for corn (even if in a different name).

18. Exhibitors may make only one entry in each class, No exceptions.

19. No person will be allowed to see the entries or to have access to the entry book until after the awards have been made.

20. Notice - The fair assumes no responsibility in cases of loss or damage to stock or other exhibits from any cause, and upon this condition only are all entries received.

21. A sweepstakes prize of \$100 will be awarded to the winner of

the most blue ribbons, \$75 for second place, \$50 for third place and \$25 for fourth place.

22. No exhibitors will be permitted inside the Exhibit Building during the judging and until the judging is completed.

23. The standard system of awarding will be used with blue, red and white ribbons presented in each department.

24. Entries will be accepted of articles not listed in the premium list when, in the opinion of the registering official, such articles represent distinct classes suitable for exhibit within one of the departments of the fair. The fair reserves the right to reject any entry not considered suitable, whether of a class or not.

25. If available, space will be allotted for the exhibition of articles other than those listed and if considered worthy for exhibition. All general rules apply. Ribbons may be awarded where merited, but these ribbons will not be considered in competition for "Most Blue Ribbons Won" in Adult or Youth Division.

*-Content provided by Columbus County Agriculture Fair*



Exhibitors' entries will be accepted for registration at the Evelyn Rabon Building on Friday from noon-4 p.m. and on Saturday 10-4 p.m.

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# Blast from the past: County Fair reviving pageant

By **DIANA MATTHEWS**  
dianamatthews@nrcolumbus.com

Participating in pageants across the county “opened up a lot of doors for me” and “helped me pay for college,” said Jan Walters Hardee of Whiteville. And it all started when she competed for the title of Miss Columbus County Agriculture Fair in October 1986.

Now Hardee wants to provide that same opportunity for girls and young women ages 2-21 by reviving the pageant at this year’s fair. Five contestants will receive crowns and trophies Saturday, Oct. 12, after a program on the fairgrounds’ main stage at 6 p.m., she said.

Since there was no Columbus County fair queen chosen last year, Hardee has invited reigning N.C. Rhododendron Queen Andi Creech to crown

this year’s winners, Hardee said. The oldest of the five will also receive a \$500 scholarship, provided by the fair committee, at the end of her reign.

There’s no entry fee, and the pageant doesn’t include a talent competition. “A lot of girls have talents on a playing field,” or in some other pursuit that’s “harder to display on a stage,” Hardee said. We hope those girls will come be a part of it.”

## Not about the crown

Hardee was a high school senior when she placed as first runner-up at the Columbus County Agriculture Fair. A month later she won the title of Miss Whiteville High School.



N.C. Rhododendron Queen Andi Creech

Those experiences “kind of started my love for competing and meeting people,” she said. “I fell in love.”

Hardee stayed active in pageantry at local, state and national levels into her early 20s. She won the crown of Fair Bluff Watermelon Festival queen in 1990 and went on to become N.C. Watermelon queen in 1991. She was second runner-up in the national watermelon pageant in 1992.

Nearly four decades later, she said she has “friends from here to Arizona” because of the pageants and the travel she undertook to represent her constituents back home.

“You’ve got to go in

knowing that it’s not about the shiny crown,” she said. The real reward is “what you gain from it in friendship and what you learn about yourself through the process. You’re not in competition with anyone but yourself.”

## Passing along the vision

Since her own pageantry days, Hardee has coached many girls to prepare for competitions, helped direct pageants and served as a mistress of ceremonies or as a judge “all over North Carolina,” she said.

Hardee believes pageant participation can be “a huge benefit for young ladies.” For example, it hones their public speaking skills, preparing them for scholarship or college interviews and eventually the work world. In exchange for the opportunities they

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and find a treasure!





receive, she said, winners accept a "huge" responsibility for community service. "You travel quite a bit" to promote the town, school, agricultural product or festival associated with the contest. When she was state watermelon queen, Hardee attended "festivals all over the state. You go into those communities and introduce yourself," she said. "You ride in parades, and you get people interested in visiting your community."

Recent North Carolina watermelon queens have made appearances at grocery store openings or spread goodwill by delivering watermelon to the N.C. State University football team at practice, Hardee said. She hopes this year's Miss Columbus County Fair "will give some visibility not only to the fair but to Columbus County."

#### Contestants

Contestants in the fair pageant must reside in Columbus County. Hardee's advice to those who are uncertain about entering is "Do it for the fun of it. This should be something enjoyable and a chance to meet

friends from all over."

The youngest division in this year's pageant is tiny miss, for contestants ages 2-4 years. They will be expected to wear agricultural or fair attire. The little miss contestants, ages 5-8, and junior miss contestants, ages 9-12, will compete in agricultural/fair attire and also in party dresses.

Contestants in the teen miss division, ages 13-16, will undergo five-minute personal interviews and will compete in casual wear and evening gowns. Contestants in the Miss Columbus County Fair division, ages 17-21, will undergo seven-minute personal interviews and appear in casual wear and evening gowns. Ages are as of Oct. 8, 2024.

The entry deadline was Sept. 18. Contestants will rehearse on the fairgrounds' main stage at 10 a.m. on Saturday, Oct. 12.

Each contestant is required to purchase one Columbus County Fair Contestant T-shirt for \$25, which she will wear in the fair parade. She will receive free fair admission all week when wearing the shirt. An additional shirt will be provided for the pageant's opening number; the applica-



PHOTO FROM NEWS REPORTER ARCHIVES

The News Reporter's archives include photos of previous Columbus County Fair royalty. Shown are 1986 Junior Miss Abby Edwards, left, and 1986 Little Miss Kimberly Lewis.

tion materials say. All Columbus County Fair parade fees, shirts, car signs and clothing queens will be responsible for their own cars, throughout their reigns.

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STAFF PHOTO BY DIANA MATTHEWS

Gathered Oct. 5, 2023, under the shelter of the county fairgrounds' educational tobacco curing barn are six of the remaining tobacco farmers in Columbus County. Left to right are Grayson Foley, Kenneth Foley, Channing Foley, Ty Hardwick, Daryl Hardwick and Brent Watts.

## 'Columbus County gold'

*Replica curing barn commemorates tobacco's role in local agricultural history*

Fair board members opened a full-size cypress wood educational tobacco curing barn just in time for the 2023 fair.

Only a handful of families grow tobacco in Columbus County these days. But when the crop was in its heyday, 4,500 individuals in the county farmed the crop or had allotments to grow it. With four tobacco markets and 20 warehouses, Columbus was in the top five counties for tobacco workload in the U.S.

"Simply put, tobacco touched almost every aspect of the lives of Columbus County,"

said farmer, fair board member and District 5 County Commissioner Brent Watts during the 2023 unveiling of the barn. "In the fall, everyone wore their Sunday best to the markets on the opening day. Downtown merchants, who operated for almost a year on handshakes and trust, saw accounts paid off.

"Farmers were proud of their crops and treated them like they were gold, and they were gold," Watts said. "Columbus County gold."

To show how the barn would've looked in curing sea-

son, donors supplied heating equipment, tobacco leaves, sticks and other items. Built by Bill Worley and Sons Construction, the structure includes a wide paved area under the shelter, where visitors can gather and swap tobacco farming stories or just enjoy a cool drink and a bag of boiled peanuts.



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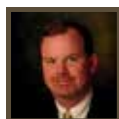
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