



OHIO FAIR MANAGERS ASSOCIATION

Winter Newsletter Post Convention

February 2026



The 101st Annual Convention Report

The annual gathering of Ohio Fair Members, Festivals, Service Members, Junior Fair Boards, speaker and guests was truly an event to educate, network, have some fun, shop the tradeshow and hear good presentations and workshops. Total attendance was 3954 THANK YOU.

Crowning the event was the selection of **Edy Solet of Erie County Fair as the 2026 Ohio Fairs' Queen.**

The Ohio Fairs Hall of Fame inducted a class of 5 Outstanding Fair Board Members **Theresa Call, Summit County Fair; Gary Prater, Ross County Fair; Inactive members: Dan Gray, Brown County Fair; Kim Meyers, Lorain County Fair and a Supporting Official County Engineer Bert Dawson, Columbiana County Fair.** This class totaled over 200 years of supporting their local county fairs.

The 12 Best Practices Workshop, an expansion of the Best Practices Workshops were well attended with an average of 58 per workshop. Bob has more details with this newsletter. Overall attendance for workshops was good to overflow and the feedback on the survey indicates that **Chairwoman Deb Hukill** and team hit the right list of topics.

The Annual ORC meeting with the **Director Baldrige** on Friday saw 744 in attendance and the Director invited **Evelyn Hill, Ohio 4-H Teen Leadership President and Carter Boyd, State FFA President** for remarks. Both gave outstanding outlooks on their youth organizations. The OFMA Board of Directors in cooperation with ODA moved to honor Governor DeWine, as this will be his last OFMA address to Ohio's Fairs with a testimonial video and a certificate of accomplishment. **Governor DeWine** was unable to attend due to a Federal Meeting in WDC, **Lt. Governor Tressel** accepted the Certificate and then addressed the gathering with outstanding remarks on Ohio's Fairs, Ohio's needs to continue the education and workforce development, to build upon Ohio's record of achievement in these key areas. Ohio Senate President Rob McColley and Secretary of State LaRose address the gathering as well.

ODA recognized the outstanding fair supporters at the conclusion of the meeting were: *Chris Comden, Defiance County Fair; Mike & Linda Foreman, Darke County Fair; Jay Ward Flax, Clark County Fair; Brad White, Adams County Fair; Pam Tucker-Young, Richland County Fair; Steve May, Morrow County Fair; Casey Clemens, Morgan County Fair; Dr. Scott Pendleton DVM, Harrison County Fair; Sharon Eldreth, Portage County/Randolph Fair. OFMA Congratulates all for the support to each of your Fairboards.*



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Ohio Fair Managers Association
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Reflections on our OFMA 101st Annual Convention

May I first say your attendance and enthusiasm at the 101st Ohio Fair Managers Convention made this event so special for our Elected Officials, our fair board directors, the OFMA board of directors, sponsors, exhibitors, our Queens, Jr Fair & FFA attendees, and special guests. Just give yourselves a BIG “OH” “IO” for all these “Difference Makers.”

We recognized Ohio’s 70th Governor Mike DeWine for his countless support of time, funding, and personal dedication to all our fairs in Ohio. With the help of our 40th Director of Agriculture, Brian Baldrige, a Certificate of Appreciation was presented to Ohio’s Lieutenant Governor Jim Tressel, who spoke on the Governor’s behalf.

Our sponsors and exhibitors were welcomed and thanked for their efforts and continued support in so many ways to keep our OFMA strong.

Our sessions this year were topped off with 12 Best Practices sessions for our Secretaries, Treasurers, Fair Board Directors, and other attendees. Please continue to critique and make suggestions for upcoming conventions.

We heard reflections from our 2025 Ohio Fairs’ Queen Amberly Szczerbiak and selected Edith Solet as our 2026 Ohio Fairs’ Queen from Erie County.

Our Jr Fair and FFA sessions were started with a very dynamic key note address from speaker Dan Clark who highlighted “Decisive Motivation.”

We were blessed with a great “Talent Showcase” with lots of other singing and other acts offered during other sessions at the Convention.

You helped us raise significant funds at the “Auction/Gala” from the many donations given by our OFMA Districts, fairs, and individuals. Thank You.

Our special guests, spouses, and activities committee had a great tour of a local distillery and the OSU Horseshoe, and a great response for the Bourbon production and the wine-bologna bingo sellouts.

On Sunday we celebrated 5 new inductees into the Ohio Fair Manager’s Hall of Fame while recognizing all our fairs that received 2025 Communication Awards. This was the 16th year our Sunday morning attendees have supported the Stephanie Speelman Cancer Foundation with over \$2000 in donations on the average during all these years.

Going forward we truly hope you are able to attend your respective OFMA Spring Meetings and continue to keep your OFMA a grass roots organization always making the best better.

Finally, Thank You! I am humbled to have been selected as your President of the Ohio Fair Managers Association. During our District meetings we challenged you to take advantage of your Director passes and visit other fairs. As I hinted several times during the convention... we want you to be, and my theme-challenge to you is to be, a “Difference Maker”. A Difference Maker understands they are a steward of tradition, heritage, and the future – serving their fair board and ag society with an irrational passion.

May God Richly Bless and Keep you....

Tom Stocksdale

President – Ohio Fair Managers Association



SAVE THE DATE NEXT OFMA CONVENTION JANUARY 7-10, 2027

Friday Evening Showcase Returned to Traditional Format

Bob Dawson, Talent Chairman

The Friday Evening Showcase returned to its traditional format and lit up the Hyatt Regency Ballroom with a packed house of fair directors and guests. Headliner Cledus T. Judd, joined by six outstanding bands, delivered an entertaining evening of music and laughter.

Guests enjoyed complimentary desserts and beverages sponsored by Acrisure as Cledus T. Judd opened the show with a preview of his *Iconic Moron Tour 2026*, showcasing his signature blend of country music and comedy that had the audience engaged from the start.

This year's showcase featured six talented acts: Michael Christopher; Ian Harrison; Tege Holt & Lonesome Pines; Silver Stallion – *A Country Legend Tribute to the Highwaymen*; Julia Neville; and Karissa Ella.

Sincere thanks go to the agents and promoters who nominated and sponsored this year's performers.

Special appreciation is extended to Steve Cover of ERG Talent for producing the show, and to Above Sound and Lighting for providing the evening's production.

Bob



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OFMA MARKET PLACE TRADESHOW REPORT

Paul Lease Chairman & 1st VP

The 2026 Ohio Fair Convention was a great success once again. The trade show is essential as a cost effective marketing tool to reach, engage, and connect with potential customers and partnerships. They provide access to decision makers, attendees can connect with industry peers, and they feature workshops and seminars that provide insight to industry trends.

Every trade show is different, but the best ones are fueled by a spark that brings together passionate fair leaders, and colleagues, from across Ohio for meaningful discussion, valuable insight, and renewed inspiration.

I would like to extend my sincere appreciation to everyone who participated, supported, and contributed to this years event. Your engagement, and commitment, to open conversations help shape and strengthen the fair community as a whole.

I would like to congratulate our 2026 Ohio Fairs' Queen, Edy Solet, who represents Erie County Fair.

Thank You **ESL TECHNOLOGIES** for Sponsoring the tradeshow of 173 total spaces .



Paul

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2026 Ohio Fairs' Queen EDY SOLET

As I arrived at convention on Wednesday I was very excited and eager to get to know all of the other queens. From the start it was a very warm and welcoming environment.

From early interviews on Thursday to final 5 interviews late at night, the whole day was very coordinated and well planned. The judges provided a fun and friendly manner making all of us contestants feel calm.

Everyone immediately welcomed all the queens as if we were family already. I felt truly honored just to make it to the top 5 and knew any one of us would make a great queen.

Friday was such a fun day starting off with the ODA breakfast, then the getting to experience the trade show, and finally the Showcase Friday night closing out the evening.

Amberly was such a kind Queen who made us all feel special on an important day. The following morning was filled with nothing but excitement. For the entirety of Saturday and Sunday I was welcomed into a whole new family.

It was very reassuring to know I had so many people supporting me. Convention as a whole was a once in a lifetime experience that I will cherish forever.

I will be attending several of the spring meetings and look forward to meeting all of you. To reach out to me my e-mail address is: 2026ohiofairsqueen@gmail.com

EDY

2026 Ohio Fairs' Queen Edy Solet, Erie County; 1st runner up Chloe Dickey, Richwood Independent; 2nd runner up Isabelle Busey, Fairfield County; 3rd runner up Kyla Conley, Wyandot County; 4th runner up Campbell Reese, Geauga County



Meet 2nd Vice President Alan Aichholz

Well, once again another Fair Manager's Convention has come and gone and we are on to finalizing preparations for our Fairs. We hope that you all enjoyed this year's Convention and found it both entertaining and informative, with things that you can take back to your boards. If there is anything you would like to see at future Conventions, please feel free to reach out to me or any of your OFMA board members.

At the Annual Meeting, I was elected as the 2nd Vice President. I am honored to serve you in this capacity and will do my very best to continue to help us move forward. I want to let everyone know that if you have any questions, concerns or comments that I, and all of my fellow OFMA Board Members, are always willing to lend an ear and assist you in any way that we can. All of our contact information can be found on the OFMA website under the 'ABOUT' tab.



Thank You for your support and I look forward to working with all of you!!!!

Alan

Ohio Agricultural Fairs Impact on the Local Economy Fair week

Ohio 2024 Annual Fairs High-Level Estimated Economic and Fiscal Impact		JOHNSON CONSULTING					
		<25K Attendees	25K-100K Attendees	100K-200K Attendees	200K-500K Attendees	500K-1M Attendees	TOTAL
Activity Volume							
	Number of Fairs:	40	34	11	5	2	92
	Fairs Attendance:	329,521	1,826,678	1,500,196	1,378,296	1,838,859	6,873,550
	Out-of-Town Visitors:	50,719	212,881	173,139	219,725	447,029	1,103,492
	Overnight Visitors:	2,618	9,610	6,549	8,808	39,620	67,206
	Hotel Room Nights:	1,540	5,653	3,853	5,181	23,306	39,533
Estimated Spending Volume							
	Spending at Fairs:	\$6,590,420	\$73,067,120	\$60,007,840	\$62,023,320	\$119,525,835	\$321,214,535
	Spending Outside Fairs:	\$11,778,073	\$55,908,326	\$45,523,038	\$49,953,583	\$89,995,159	\$253,158,178
	Fair Operational Spending:	\$35,223,365	\$57,981,989	\$38,312,226	\$30,153,385	\$31,432,972	\$193,103,937
	Total Direct Spending:	\$53,591,858	\$186,957,435	\$143,843,104	\$142,130,288	\$240,953,965	\$767,476,650
Economic Impact							
	Wages Created:	\$40,934,203	\$141,759,281	\$108,671,562	\$106,500,953	\$180,285,344	\$578,151,343
	Ongoing Jobs Sustained:	845	3,115	2,420	2,429	4,134	12,944
	Total Economic Impact:	\$119,558,919	\$414,119,790	\$318,282,977	\$314,066,266	\$532,051,467	\$1,698,079,420
Fiscal Impact							
	State Sales Tax Revenues:	\$3,081,532	\$10,750,052	\$8,270,978	\$8,172,492	\$13,854,853	\$44,129,907
	State Hotel Tax Revenues:	-	-	-	-	-	-
	Total State Fiscal Impact:	\$3,081,532	\$10,750,052	\$8,270,978	\$8,172,492	\$13,854,853	\$44,129,907
Activity Volume per Fair							
	Number of Fairs:	40	34	11	5	2	#REF!
	Average Duration of Fairs (Days):	6.35	6.76	7.09	6.60	10.00	6.68 (Average)
	Combined Duration of Fairs (Days):	254	230	78	33	20	#REF!
	Economic Impact per Fair Day:	\$470,704	\$1,800,521	\$4,080,551	\$9,517,160	\$26,602,573	#REF!
	Fiscal Impact per Fair Day:	\$12,132	\$46,739	\$106,038	\$247,651	\$692,743	#REF!

Kevin Schmiedebusch District 2 Allen County Fair

Kevin Schmiedebusch is married to Renee Schmiedebusch and together they have 5 Children and 3 Grandchildren. Kevin has lived in the Allen County Lima, Ohio area for over 60 years.

Kevin worked in the Construction, Agriculture, and Municipal Business for well over 40 years retiring from Murphy Tractor and Equipment in 2022.

Kevin has served as The Bath Township Director of the Allen County Agricultural Society for the past 5 years and has served on many Committees and helped out in other areas as well. The committees he has served on include Harness Racing, Budget and Finance, Buildings and Grounds, Entertainment, Concessions, Security, Gates, and Parking, Equipment, Entertainment, 4H Horse, and Communications. He also plays Santa Claus for the Bright Nights (The drive thru Christmas Light Display at the Fairgrounds) and other community events.

Kevin's hobby's include Golfing, Hunting and Shooting, Camping, watching Harness Racing (He has ownership in a few horses), and watching the OHIO STATE BUCKEYES!

Kevin is excited to be part of the Ohio Fair Managers Association Board of Directors.



Kevin



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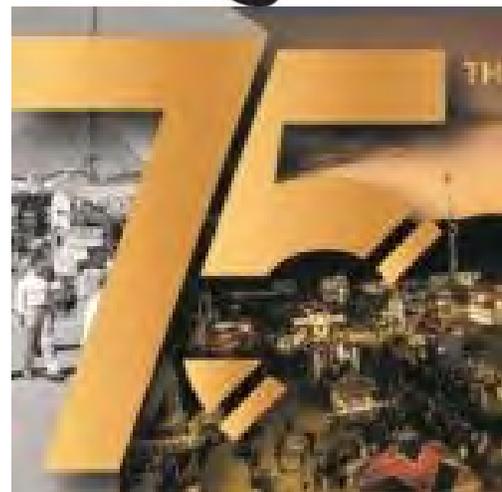
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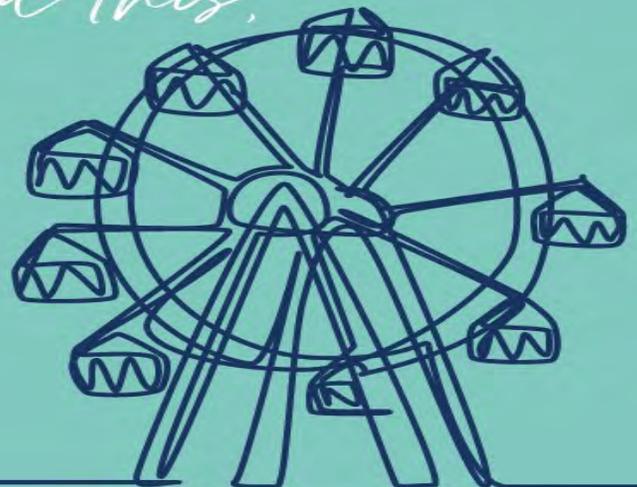
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New OFMA Board Directors

Josh Rettig District 1 Henry County Fair

I'm Josh Rettig, and I'm honored to serve as OFMA District 1 Director. I have been involved with the Henry County Agricultural Society since 2016, serving as Vice President for 2018–2019 and President since 2020. My involvement with the fair, however, goes back much further. I grew up around the fair through 4-H, and from a young age I enjoyed pitching in wherever help was needed. That early experience shaped my appreciation for what fairs represent and the people who make them possible.

Outside of fair work, I farm alongside my brothers, uncle, and cousin. Agriculture has always been a central part of my life, and that background gives me a practical perspective on the challenges and opportunities facing today's fairs.

As District 1 Director, my focus is on improving, learning, and helping fairs navigate the changes we continue to face—while still respecting the traditions that define us. Ohio fairs are special because of their history, their role in our communities, and the time spent there with family and friends.

My father served as a longtime fair director, and I'm proud to continue that tradition of service. I look forward to working with fellow OFMA members and supporting the continued success of Ohio's fairs.

Josh



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Saturday General Session Speaker

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The Ohio Fair Managers Association is a voluntary, not-for-profit corporation serving state, independent and county agricultural fairs, shows, exhibitions and festivals. Associate members of the OFMA are engaged in providing products and services to its members.

The OFMA represents 95 fairs promoting general welfare, encouraging cooperation among fairs in Ohio, educational opportunities, legislative support, and assistance with ODA requirements.

The OFMA hosts an annual convention offering educational and networking sessions our fairs and junior fairboards. Also, district meetings are held each spring.



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Best Practices Sessions Well Attended

Bob Dawson, OFMA Treasurer

This year's Best Practices sessions were both well received and well attended, with strong participation of 747 attending throughout the program.

Twelve training sessions were offered, covering topics identified by the Ohio Department of Agriculture, the Auditor of State, and the OFMA business office as key areas in need of continued focus and improvement.

Generous sponsorship for this important series was provided by Morris Beverage III and his company, **M.W. Beverage, Inc.** of Lake County.

Best Practices information was presented on a wide range of topics, including secretaries' and managers' responsibilities; officers' and grounds managers' duties; treasurers' and secretaries' roles; audits; public safety; cybersecurity planning; chart of accounts; report filings; elections and Redbook items; and Sunshine Laws.

Special thanks go to **OFMA Training Director Bev Fisher CFE** and the highly skilled practitioners who generously donated their time and expertise to lead these sessions. Many session PowerPoints and other informational materials are available on the OFMA website and may be shared as a resource.

Training certificates are also available online, and participants are encouraged to print and retain them in their professional portfolios as documentation of continuing education.

Gift card drawings were held following each training session. Winners included *Madison Wildes of Belmont County; David Keller of Fairfield County; Faith Cottrill Marine of Fayette County (two awards); Tess Collins of Mercer County; Deb Watson of Meigs County; Kevin Willoughby of Harrison County; Corky Detwiler of Champaign County; Jill Montle of Albany Independent Fair; Denise Gerspacher of Medina County; Annika Thomas of Hocking County; and Zeb Flegel of Medina County.* The three \$1000 checks will be awarded to *Athens County Fair with 30 attending sessions, Medina 29 attending, Hamilton 27 attending,* attendance prizes will be distributed at the Spring Meetings.

BOB



The Ohio Fair Managers Board of Directors & Management Staff Thank You for Your Participation 101st Annual Convention

Family, Friends, Fairs=Fun

Spring Meeting Dates 2026

District 1 & 2 Saturday March 28 Henry County Fairgrounds
District 5 & 9 Sunday April 19 Lake County Fair Event Center Lunch
District 7 & 8 Saturday April 11 Zanesville Fairgrounds Dinner
District 3, 4 & 6 Sunday April 12 Washington Courthouse Lunch

Future Conventions (Thurs-Sun)

January 7-10, 2027 January 5-9, 2028 January 4-7, 2029

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VISION Realize a strong soybean industry for future generations of Ohio soybean farmers

GOAL | EXPAND MARKETS

Create a preference with customers and promote efficient delivery systems that lead to increased sales of Ohio soybeans and soybean-derived food and products

OBJECTIVES

- Increase domestic and international usage of Ohio soybeans and soybean-derived products, including specialty products
- Increase customer preference for high-quality, sustainable Ohio soybeans
- Increase on-farm resources for farmers and support transportation industry partnerships

GOAL | DRIVE INNOVATION

Support agronomic improvements, technological advancements, and the development of new soybean products

OBJECTIVES

- Develop and commercialize new soy-based products for industrial and consumer applications
- Develop and commercialize new soybean traits and technologies that increase value and create specialty product opportunities
- Research technologies and on-farm agronomic practices that support Ohio soybean farmers' efficient soybean production and commitment to conservation

GOAL | BUILD UNDERSTANDING

Support Ohio soybean farmers by educating and communicating with key target audiences

OBJECTIVES

- Increase knowledge of modern agriculture among Ohio teachers and students, including workforce development
- Communicate the value of checkoff investments to Ohio soybean farmers and industry partners
- Increase understanding among key stakeholders of the impact and sustainability of the Ohio soybean industry

GOAL | THINK FUTURE

Advance the soybean industry by leveraging checkoff funds through innovative partnerships and projects

OBJECTIVES

- Connect with new partners who share our commitment to continuous improvement
- Seek out projects that will prepare Ohio's soybean industry for future challenges and opportunities
- Attack challenges and opportunities head-on with novel tactics
- Understand and act on future trends impacting soybean farmers

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2026 Junior Fair Conference Results

Roger Smith Chairman
OFMA Junior Fair Conference

Saturday morning of the OFMA convention dawned crisp and partly cloudy with a little bit of snow that had fallen overnight. Junior Fair Board members from all over the state traveled to Columbus for the OFMA Junior Fair Conference.

The weekend started on Friday evening for about a dozen Junior Fair Boards from around the state. They came in early for a networking session that included pizza and beverages. The evening was an opportunity to interact with other teens from around Ohio. The evening was coordinated by several extension educators from around Ohio and included team building and other activities. There were about 200 teens registered for this session, and it continues to expand a bit each year. The two supporting sponsors of the evening were *Kolar Concessions, Linville Food Services. THANK YOU.*



Saturday morning found more teens making their way to the convention center. There was an early morning set of sessions for the early risers, followed by the opening ceremonies. The Keynote speaker, Dan Clark, provided an inspiring message that included examples of some of the challenges that he had gone through in his life. The morning session ended with the crowning of the *2026 Ohio Fairs' Queen, Edith Solet from Erie County.*

After the opening ceremonies, more educational sessions followed. In all, there were over 35 sessions pointed toward the junior fair board members and their advisors, with the aim being to help them grow into their roles and take home some life lessons to be used in the future. OFMA is pleased to be able to offer this program for junior fair board members and the program is constructed with great help from our extension educators from around the state. I would encourage each fair to make an attempt to send some of their junior fair board members to this conference in 2027. **Presenting Sponsors:** *Ohio State Fair, Ohio Soybean Council, Willandale Golf Car.*

Roger



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Conrad Haneberg
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2026 Ohio County and Independent Fair Queens Thursday January 15. 76 participated

Final 5 are on the wooden riser to the right with the 2025 Ohio Fairs' Queen Amberly to the right





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