



# OHIO FAIR MANAGERS ASSOCIATION

*May 2026 Newsletter*

*County Fairs are Weeks Away*



**Spring Meetings** are in the books with over 700 attending the 4 meetings and Greater Ohio Showman honored the following individuals with our fairs. Lifetime Achievement Award **Jo Ellen Albanese Ohio State Fair**; Fair Secretary of the Year **Barb Ackerman, Monroe County Fair**; Special Appreciation Award **Dave Herroon Lake County Fair**; Lifetime Achievement Award **Conrad Haneberg, Medina County Fair**; Special Appreciation **Nathan Krause Butler County Fair**. Congratulations, the award citation's are in this newsletter.

**Hardin County Fairgrounds Experienced a Devasting tornado March 26**, here is the link to information and including the funding account, board meeting minutes and commissioners support on rebuilding [Tornado – Hardin County Fair](#) More information on page 22 of this newsletter

**Warren County Agricultural Society (WCAS)** are involved in a lease property issue on their Warren County Fairgrounds with the Warren County Commissioners and the City of Lebanon. The Ohio Fair Managers, OFMA Policy Group Government Advantage, along with Ohio Harness Horseman are working to assist the WCAS. Proposed legislation changes to the ORC 1711 by a Warren County Legislature are not acceptable to the OFMA. *Googling Warren County Fair will bring a host of articles.* WCAS has retained legal council.

The OFMA, continuing to foster leadership, networking and sharing of our talents is rolling out a new **Ohio Professionals in Fairs program (OPF)**, this will be a series of trainings and networking for Staff and Directors running the year round operations of the fair. There will be no cost to the Ohio Fairs Members of this programing. The following survey link is available with a brief survey. [Survey - Professionals](#) This program does not replace any Training Programs with the International Association of Fairs and Expositions, merely to provide support and networking at a state level.

**Ian Hill** and the **“YOU MAKE A DIFFERENCE TOUR”** will travel with 5 county Fairgrounds hosting in June. The OFMA Has Been Awarded a Grant – This grant brings the “You Make THE Difference” National Initiative into our province/state, giving our members access to resources, training, and support at no cost. **The Tour is Coming to Our Communities** – “The You Make THE Difference Tour” will visit local fairs and societies, hosting face-to-face sessions that inspire, train, and strengthen grassroots leaders and volunteers.

**Deb Hukill and the Program committee** will be building the Educational Schedule for the January 102nd annual conference and would suggest topics and presenters. We are looking to bring in several Professional Presenters and if you have heard or know of someone that can help us coach please let the office know at [ohiofairs@att.net](mailto:ohiofairs@att.net).

**Important Note Please see Page 3 for Mandatory Required completion dates for several Programs.**

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**Ohio Fair Managers Association**  
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[ohiofairs@att.net](mailto:ohiofairs@att.net)

## *A message from your OFMA President, Tom Stocksdale*

Your OFMA board has now reorganized and we welcome several new faces including District 1 Director Josh Rettig, District 2 Director Kevin Schmidebusch, District 5 Director Kerry Taylor, and Director at Large Kim Meyers.

One of our first priorities was to reset our Committee assignments putting our Directors onto committees where they can use their strengths. As you all do in your respective fairs, relying on the work of committees outside the Board meetings is paramount in keeping our OFMA Board and your fairs moving forward with the best strategies and providing the best information to make sound decisions.

We have recently completed our OFMA Spring meetings and want to especially thank our respective District Directors for being hosts for all that attended with a special thanks to the following fairs for being our host fair locations: Districts 1-2 Henry County, Districts 7-8 Muskingum County, Districts 3-4-6 Fayette County, and Districts 5-9 Lake County. The food and fellowship were great... the ideas and recommendations were excellent, and the face-to-face discussions are so important.

In addition... our Spring Meetings are designed to do several things. We know one of the number one priorities is to pick up your Director passes which make it possible to visit our Ohio county and independent fairs all year long. Even more importantly it gives those in attendance a chance to hear from our friends from OHHA, OSU Extension, GOSA, ODA, our Legislative Update, meet several local county and elected Officials, and hear some comments from your OFMA officials.

As you plan and start off your respective 2026 State, County, and Independent fairs... (1) please know the important Links and Dates for the OFMA, (2) know your OFMA staff and deadlines, (3) check in with your queens to assure they are making an attempt to visit fairs and invite them to report at one of your fair board meetings, (4) know your ODA key contacts and key dates, (5) please keep in close contact with your District Directors, "working as a grass roots organization", who carry your ideas, concerns, and recommendations to the OFMA board meetings, (6) please keep the OFMA office updated on any of your fair office or Director changes, (7) please share your news articles with the OFMA office, (8) please share any conference session topics as they are suggested through the fair season, (9) take the time to stay connected with all your key contacts – Commissioners – elected Officials – volunteers – Jr fair and youth (inviting Jr Fair officers to a Sr fair board meeting), and (10) remember this year is the celebration of America 250.

***Your OFMA Board and my theme in 2026 is challenging you to be a "Difference Maker."  
Wishing you the best possible year in 2026. May God Bless you and Yours.***

***Tom***



**SAVE THE DATE NEXT OFMA CONFERENCE JANUARY 7-10, 2027**

# Cybersecurity Program HB 96: KEY CYBER MANDATES FOR LOCAL GOVERNMENT ENTITIES

Local Government Entities Including Agricultural Societies Must: Implement a cybersecurity program, Obtain approval from their legislative body for ransomware payments

Cyber incidents must be reported within specific timeframes to Ohio Auditor of State While support is available from several state programs, if you have an existing private-sector or third-party IT and/or Cybersecurity provider, stay the course!

**WHO MUST COMPLY & WHEN** Applies to all political subdivisions:

"Auditor of State Compliance Timeline for Cyber Program Counties and Cities should have a program in place by **June 1, 2026**. *Document Support Link from the ohiofairs.org education file* [https://ohiofairs.org/wp-content/uploads/2026/02/fair-managers-aos-deck\\_-1-1.pdf](https://ohiofairs.org/wp-content/uploads/2026/02/fair-managers-aos-deck_-1-1.pdf)

## **UPDATE: New Federal Accessibility Standard for State and Local Government Websites Including County Agricultural Societies**

**Ohio Auditor of State Keith Faber**

*On April 20, 2026, the U.S. Department of Justice issued an extension for the compliance dates. The compliance date for State and local government entities with a total population of 50,000 or more is extended from April 24, 2026, to April 26, 2027. The compliance date for public entities with a total population of less than 50,000, or any special district government, is extended from April 26, 2027, to April 26, 2028.*

Below is the original message sent on April 1, 2026:

The Ohio Auditor of State has issued an advisory regarding new federal accessibility requirements issued by the U.S. Department of Justice (DOJ) under Title II of the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA). These updates establish clear standards to ensure that state and local governments make their websites and mobile applications accessible to individuals with disabilities, including services provided through third party platforms. The advisory memo can be found on the AOS Advisory Memos and Policy Updates page of the AOS website.

This guidance is intended to help public entities understand their responsibilities and prepare for the upcoming federal compliance deadlines. Entities are encouraged to review the available DOJ resources linked in the memo and consult their legal counsel to ensure they meet the new ADA standards. **Contact Destiny Schultz if you have questions. 614-466-4514**

## **2024 County & Independent Fairs Grant Project Completion Reports Due No later than June 30, 2026**

**Ohio Department of Development contact:** [CountyandIndependentFairs@development.ohio.gov](mailto:CountyandIndependentFairs@development.ohio.gov).

**Grant of approximately \$106,000:** The County & Independent Fairs Grant Project Completion Report is required to be submitted to the Ohio Department of Development ("Development") evidencing the use of the approved County & Independent Fairs Grant funds.

This Project Completion Report requests information for grant expenditures. The report will collect information on the total grant expenditures as well as other project details.

The Project Completion Report is due to Development upon completion of the project. Please email the completed reports to [CountyandIndependentFairs@development.ohio.gov](mailto:CountyandIndependentFairs@development.ohio.gov).

## Ohio Fairs Queen Edy Solet

It was a fantastic spring getting to attend the district meetings for the Ohio fairs. I was able to meet and say hello to people from convention in January.

I was very excited to officially get this year started! Since convention I was able to attend the Ohio 4-H Conference in Columbus where I got to meet with some friendly faces from OFMA as well as getting to meet youth from across the state.

After the conference I was able to attend Plowboy Prom hosted by Collegiate 4-H at OSU. It was a fantastic evening of dancing, laughter, and friendship. Also since convention I was able to speak at Huron County Fair's office training on leadership. It was a fantastic night getting to talk to youth about leadership and how to implement it within our 4-H community and beyond.

Overall it has been such a fantastic spring getting to see all of the behind the scenes work that goes into our fairs. We truly have some of the most amazing and dedicated people running our fairs.

I am so excited to get this summer started visiting all of your wonderful fairs. I hope to represent you all to the best of my abilities! I hope everyone has a wonderful 2026 fair season!

Best  
Edy Solet



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## Director Brian Baldrige's Thoughts

Ohio Department of Agriculture

As we look ahead to the 2026 fair season, the Ohio Department of Agriculture remains committed to supporting each of our county and independent fairs. Ohio's fairs are more than dates on a calendar—they are traditions rooted in community pride, youth development, and our state's strong agricultural heritage.

Every summer, our fairs create experiences that stay with families for a lifetime. They showcase the hard work of our young people, elevate local agriculture, and strengthen the connection between our communities and the farmers who feed them. Your leadership makes all of this possible.

At ODA, we take seriously our responsibility to support you in that work. Whether it's ensuring ride safety, assisting with livestock health and compliance, offering guidance on operations, or simply being a partner, our team is here to help you deliver a safe, successful, and memorable fair season. We understand the challenges that come with managing a fair, and we remain committed to providing the resources, communication, and on-the-ground support you need.

Thank you for your continued leadership and for the dedication you bring to your fairs and communities. I look forward to seeing many of you this fair season as I make my way across the state. Until then, I will continue working alongside you in the months ahead as we prepare for another outstanding season across all of Ohio's fairs.

Warm regards,

**Brian Baldrige**

Director, Ohio Department of Agriculture



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**Monday, June 08, 2026**

Medina, OH  
5:00 PM ET



**Wednesday, June 10, 2026**

Findlay, OH  
6:00 PM ET



**Thursday, June 11, 2026**

Mt Vernon, OH  
5:00 PM ET



**Friday, June 12, 2026**

Coshocton, OH  
5:00 PM ET



**Saturday, June 13, 2026**

Xenia, OH  
10:00 AM ET

## Greater Ohio Showman Lifetime Achievement Award Jo Ellen Albanese Ohio State Fair

**Nominated & Presented by: Amber Albanese Anderson**

Few people in the fair industry can claim a lifetime of service as deep, broad, and impactful as this nominee, whose dedication spans 47 years—from concession trailers at age 11 to HR leadership for one of the nation’s top ten state fairs. Her journey began at just 11 years old with Hoover Concessions. From the very beginning, she learned the business the traditional way—through long hours, overnight travel, set-ups, teardowns, and working concession trailers at fairs and events across not just Ohio, but many other states.

Remarkably, 47 years later, she still assists Hoover Concessions, demonstrating a lifelong commitment to the people and traditions of the industry. She served as an owner-operator in the concession business and continues to assist family at events and behind the scenes. She simultaneously brought her expertise to the corporate level while working with Cox Concessions, supporting operations across the industry. For more than 20 years, she has served the Ohio Expo Center & State Fair, working in the finance office, ticketing, and directly with hundreds of concessionaires, livestock exhibitors, and vendors—building relationships and supporting the smooth operation of the fair each year. She also implemented the fair’s camping reservation system, modernizing operations and improving the experience for exhibitors and vendors.

Today, Jo Ellen wears many hats during the Ohio State Fair, serving as Human Resources Administrator, overseeing the hiring of more than 1,000 seasonal employees annually, managing all fair camping operations, and supporting one of the largest events in the state, consistently recognized as one of the top ten state fairs in the country. She also visits other fairs to assist with human resources matters and provide guidance on fair operations and industry-related topics. Her contributions extend beyond her daily responsibilities. She has been an active leader within the Greater Ohio Showmen’s Association (GOSA), serving in every leadership role and ultimately becoming its first woman President, an achievement that reflects both her leadership and the respect she has earned throughout the industry. She also shares her expertise by presenting at OFMA conventions and serving on the IAFE Human Resources Administrators Committee, helping fairs nationwide strengthen their workforce practices. Maybe most importantly, she embodies the spirit of the fair industry itself. She will always answer a call, offer advice, and help solve a problem. Her willingness to mentor, guide, and support colleagues, exhibitors, and vendors has earned her widespread respect across the industry. From concession trailers to corporate offices to state government service, her career reflects a lifetime of dedication, leadership, and impact on fairs and the communities they serve. For her decades of service, innovation, and unwavering commitment. Greater Ohio Showman’s Association is Honored to award Jo Ellen Albanese the Lifetime Achievement Award at the District 3-4-6 Spring Meeting April 12, 2026



# Susan Miller Awarded Concessions Manager of the Year Fairfield County Fair

Nominated & Presented by Bill Sterling

It is with great pride that I nominate Fairfield County Fair's Susan Miller for this well-deserved recognition. For decades, Sue has been a dedicated and dependable presence at the Fairfield County Fair Office, serving in countless roles that have helped ensure the fair's continued success and welcoming atmosphere.

Sue is now handling the concessions for the fair. Throughout her many years of service, Sue has worked in numerous capacities beyond the concessions including camping coordination, FCAs, ticket sales, and general office operations. No matter the role, she approaches every responsibility with professionalism, efficiency, and a genuine willingness to help. Her versatility and institutional knowledge have made her an invaluable resource to both her colleagues and the thousands of fairgoers she assists each year. What truly sets Susan apart is her kindness and personable nature. She is often one of the first faces visitors encounter, and she represents the Fairfield County Fair with warmth, patience, and grace. Whether answering questions, resolving concerns, or simply offering a friendly smile, Susan consistently goes above and beyond to ensure everyone feels welcomed and valued.

Sue plays a big role in keeping concessions running smoothly at the Fairfield County Fair. She works closely with all vendors, helps them get their paperwork in order, assigns booth spaces, and answers countless questions along the way. When something unexpected comes up, which it always does during fair week, Sue is quick to jump in and help find a solution. Her organization, patience, and friendly approach make the whole process easier for everyone involved and help ensure fairgoers have a great experience. Over the decades, she has demonstrated an unwavering dedication to her community and to the traditions that make the Fairfield County Fair such a treasured event.

Susan Miller exemplifies the spirit of service, community, and excellence. It is an honor to recognize her many years of faithful commitment and the lasting impact she has made on the Fairfield County Fair and all who have had the pleasure of working with her. Awarded District 3-4-6 Spring Meeting April 12, 2026

A vibrant advertisement for Kissel Amusement Co. featuring a Ferris wheel, a roller coaster, and a boat ride. The text includes "KISSEL Amusement Co.", "FUNNEL CAKES", "Going the extra mile to see you smile", "Call us today 330-353-6189", "Thrilling Rides - Fair Food - Family Games", and "www.kisselamusement.com".

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An advertisement for Willandale Golf Cart Sales. The top section features the company name "WILLANDALE Golf Cart Sales" in large, stylized green and white letters, with the website "willandalegolfcartsales.com" below it. A green banner lists "SALES • SERVICE • RENTALS • PARTS & ACCESSORIES". Below this is a photograph of the EZGO store, a large building with a parking lot full of golf carts. Text below the photo reads "EZGO A Textron Company" and "Junior Fair Education Meeting Expenses Sponsor". The bottom section of the ad shows a collage of images related to golf carts and includes the address "111 N Wooster Ave • Strasburg, OH 44680" and the phone number "330-417-7480".

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# 2026 Greater Ohio Showman Lifetime Achievement Award Conrad Haneberg, Medina County Fair

Nominated & Presented By Amanda Shenberger

I have had the privilege of knowing Conrad for 19 years now. I started working for the fair in the summer of 2005 and he was one of the first directors who introduced themselves and he made an everlasting impression on me.

Conrad's knowledge of the fair industry is so vast. I absolutely love hearing his stories from all the OFMA trips that he has taken over the years as well as the conferences he has attended. And he knows everyone's history and story. When you watch him out on the grounds measuring the spaces, then helping those put their trailers in the space is great, but then hearing the conversation of asking how family members are and the stories he remembers, that is what I will always take with me. He is a person's person. And that is Conrad, he will do what he has to plus some to make sure the fair goes on.



Conrad passed November 15, 2025, Greater Ohio Showman honors Conrad with the Lifetime Achievement Award presented at District 5& 9 Spring Meeting April 19, 2026

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# Geater Ohio Showman Special Appreciation Award Dave Herroon Lake County Fair

Nominated by: Jeff Otterbacher

Time and Money can fix about anything. Hard work and dedication goes a lot further. The person that is in charge of a project is not always in charge of nor is in control of the time or the money.

As business owners we can understand the time and money needed to make improvements and to make the business better. If one could have seen the Lake county fair days before equipment began to enter the fair, one would have seen what hard work and dedication is.

There was no new million dollar building, there was no new fancy gate. What there was crispness and sharpness to the fair grounds. Weeds and over growth was cut and pulled away. Front the front to the back portions of the grounds equipment was in order. We call know what it is like to have an office desk or a work bench all a mess with clutter. We also know that feeling when we sit down at a desk or work bench and it is clean, clear and items are organized. That was the Lake County Fair grounds as equipment began to come into the fair. The general public might not have noticed, some showmen might, and even some fair board. But some of us did. For us it felt good to come into an event clean and organized. There was an excitement for the fair because of it. From the Showmen THANK YOU to Dave Herroon, awarded Spring 5&9 Meeting Lake County Fair April 19, 2026



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# Greater Ohio Showman Fair Secretary of the Year Barb Ackerman, Monroe County Fair

Presented by Drew Kissel

In 2000, Barb was asked to step into the role of Fair Board Treasurer during a challenging time in the organization's history. The sitting Treasurer had resigned in the midst of an audit, leaving behind unbalanced books. Without hesitation, Barb accepted the challenge and worked to successfully organize all of their financial documents and ensure the books were reconciled and up-to-date.

Barb served as Treasurer through 2005, when she stepped down to help plan her daughter's wedding. When the next Treasurer unexpectedly resigned-leaving behind a box of unsorted receipts during an audit-Barb was once again asked to step in. Her strong organizational skills and leadership assured all transactions were properly documented and supported.

She served as Treasurer through 2022, officially retiring after two decades of service. Retirement didn't last long. In 2024, Barb was asked to fill the Fair Board Secretary position, which she still holds today. Along the way she was honored with the "Friend of 4-H award," a testament to her support of youth and community programs. When she's not serving the fair, you'll find Barb tending her flowers, feeding hummingbirds, riding her John Deere tractor, or watching over her two donkeys. Nothing brings her more joy than spending time with her four grandchildren and cheering them on from the sidelines at their sporting events. Awarded April 11, 2026 District 7-8 Meeting Zanesville, Ohio.





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# Greater Ohio Showman Special Appreciation Award Nathan Krause Butler County Fair

Nominated by Carol Bullen

Whenever you pull into the Butler County Fairgrounds, chances are you'll find Nathan Krause—the electrician who keeps everything running—ready to lend a hand. Especially during the annual fair, Nathan is always there with a smile, willing to help with anything you might need.

Nathan plays a vital role behind the scenes, maintaining the fairgrounds' electrical systems and working year-round with the Fair Board to make upgrades and keep everything in top condition. His dedication doesn't stop there—he's known for stepping in to help with just about anything, electrical or not, whenever he has a moment. We've seen Nathan put in countless hours, especially after storms that caused major damage to the grounds. He never seeks recognition, but he's always the first to go above and beyond to make sure everything—and everyone—succeeds at the Butler County Fair. Accepting Nathan's Award on Sunday is Leon Simpson Butler Co Fair Board Member. Awarded District 3-4-6 Spring Meeting April 12, 2026



## Your Fairs Promotion in the Ohio Farm Bureau Publication thought the summer promoting Ohio's 95 Agricultural Fairs



### Ohio's County, Independent Fairs and Ohio State Fair offer:

- Family entertainment
- Opportunities for youth to showcase their projects with 4-H and FFA
- Carnival Rides
- Grandstand Smoke & Fire Demolition Derbies
- Motocross
- Tractor/Truck Pulling
- Concerts
- ...and those great FAIR Foods!

Visit [ohiofairs.org](http://ohiofairs.org) for the 2026 Ohio fair schedule or scan the QR code.

The Ohio Fair Managers Association Inc.  
P. O. Box 2625 Stow, Ohio 44224  
E-mail: [ohiofairs@att.net](mailto:ohiofairs@att.net)



2026 Ohio Fairs' Queen  
Edy Solet, Erie County Fair



**Frank Fraas Executive Director  
Ohio Harness Horsemen's Association**

As we approach the 2026 Ohio County Fair racing season, the Ohio Harness Horsemen's Association is happy to report that the OHHA Board of Directors has voted to raise purses in each division as well as make up the difference in the shortfall of Fair Funds.

This year the OHHA will be adding \$1,000 to each division. When added to the distribution from the Ohio Fair Funds and the Fair Board contribution, base purses will be \$12,000 before nominations and entry fees.

The OHHA will also continue its Fair Support with \$13,000 grants for fairs racing one day and \$15,000 for fairs racing more than one day. Non-racing fairs will each receive \$2,000 grants.

The OHHA Board also voted to raise the pool for Capital Improvement Grants to \$150,000 with a match of \$20,000 to support fairs that have projects to benefit harness racing.

Your fair vets that oversee the testing of the harness horses are entitled to a \$225 stipend from the Ohio State Racing Commission for each race card. They will need to submit an invoice to the Commission. The OHHA will have a fillable PDF invoice available on our website once the fair season begins.

Harness racing will take place at 66 county and independent fairs with over 125 race cards scheduled.

Again in 2026, the OHHA will live stream every race from every fair. Last year over 1,500 races were seen on YouTube and Facebook, garnering over a million views. Please send your Queen and King to our broadcast location to talk about how great your fair is.

As part of the racing season, the OHHA will once again have our passport program. Fans can get a passport and receive a stamp when attending fairs and major racing events across Ohio. The goal of the passport is to get fans to attend county fairs

The OHHA will also be celebrating the Semi quincentennial this year with a t-shirt giveaway at the racing fairs.

In other harness racing news from around the state, the transition of Northfield Park from MGM to Clairvest has taken place. The new owners will brand Northfield Park as Northfield Park Racino.

*Editors Note: OHHA represent over 3,700 members consisting of drivers, trainers, caretakers, owners, fans and delivers 2.7 billion dollars in annual economic activity around racing, supporting agriculture, and Ohio's county fairs.*



### **Department of Development Grant Reports Due**

All fairs are required to submit a post project report to the Ohio Department of Development. These are due by June 30, 2026. Failure to submit the report will result in a recapture of the funding. Questions about the report can be directed to: [CountyandIndependentFairs@development.ohio.gov](mailto:CountyandIndependentFairs@development.ohio.gov). This is to report post grant review regarding the funding provided in 2024 through a \$10 million appropriation.

### **Excused Absences Legislation Clears House**

Representatives Thomas Hall and Rodney Creech introduced [House Bill 125](#) to allow for excused absences participation in 4-H and FFA activities. The bill was expanded in the House to include “scheduled school-sponsored or workforce preparation activities approved by the district.” In addition to 4-H and FFA activities or programs, athletic tournaments, field trips, internships, and shadowing opportunities would qualify.

The bill does not allow these excused absences to occur during scheduled state testing or during a period of time the student might otherwise be disciplined, suspended or expelled. The bill also requires the 4-H or FFA educator to submit documentation to the school affirming the student’s participation. *OFMA submitted formal proponent testimony on this bill in the House. It passed unanimously on March 18<sup>th</sup> and will now be considered in the Ohio Senate.*

### **Amusement Ride Fee Bill Passes House**

Representatives Roy Klopfenstein and Sarah Fowler Arthur have introduced [House Bill 433](#) to enact the ride fee changes that were proposed in the budget but ultimately not included. The House had retained the Governor’s proposal, but the Senate removed it. The bill will generally decrease the permit and inspection fees for inflatable rides, while increasing fees for other mechanical rides and roller coasters. This bill was first considered by the House Agriculture Committee. Supporting the bill are inflatable ride companies, while GOSA provided in person opponent testimony. OFMA submitted opponent testimony with concern increased costs to the ride company would be passed on to agricultural societies. Despite objections, the House passed the bill by a vote of 85-4 and is now being considered by the Senate.

### **On-Line Raffle Clarification Considered**

Representatives Meredith Craig and David Thomas have introduced [House Bill 476](#) regarding on-line raffles. According to the summary the bill, among other things will: *Divides raffles into two categories: a “**traditional raffle**” that uses only physical tickets and an “**online raffle**” that uses an online raffle platform and electronic representations of tickets. On-line raffles could only be conducted by platforms approved by the Attorney General. Restricts the type of prizes and timing of drawings for online raffles. Clarifies that an entity that conducts a traditional raffle may accept electronic payments for tickets and may sell tickets over the internet or by other remote means, so long as certain requirements are met*

**These changes are being made under the charitable gaming law. Sponsors and supporters indicated they didn’t know that selling tickets on-line was not authorized. Certain charities had been investigated by the Attorney General’s office and were told that current law did not authorize selling tickets or conducting raffles on-line.**

**This legislation was considered by the House Finance Committee which made a number of changes during their process. The bill passed the Ohio House by a vote of 85-0 and will now be considered in the Senate.**

\_Continued next page

### **Legislative Report Continued: *Prevailing Wage Legislation***

Representative Beth Lear and Meredith Craig have introduced [House Bill 513](#) that would generally make paying prevailing wage optional for political subdivisions. It also raises the threshold for prevailing wage projects to \$5 million for new construction and \$250,000 for reconstruction. Those thresholds would be adjusted annually based on inflation.

This legislation was referred to the House Commerce and Labor Committee.

### **Marijuana Law Changes Go Into Effect**

After much discussion and uncertainty, [Senate Bill 56](#) has gone into effect. This law makes changes to the recreational marijuana law passed by voters in 2023. The bill also addressed hemp products, generally banning their sales outside of marijuana dispensaries.

*Regarding marijuana public use, SB 56 prohibits public smoking or vaping of marijuana and only allows the use on privately owned real property that is used primarily for residential purposes. Regarding hemp, the bill generally bans products in line with language enacted by the federal government in the bill to end the government shutdown. The bill as passed by the legislature did treat hemp beverages differently to allow the sale of limited hemp beverages through the end of 2026. However, the Governor exercised his line-item veto authority on that provision, so all hemp derived product sales are banned outside of dispensaries starting in March.*

### **Youth Employment Bill Vetoed**

Senator Tim Schaffer's legislation regarding youth employment, [Senate Bill 50](#), would have allowed those under 16 to be employed after 7pm during school year. It would have stated that with a parent or guardian's permission, those under 16 could work until 9pm. SB 50 passed the Ohio Senate by a vote of 24-9 and passed the Ohio House by a vote of 60-30. In addition to GOSA, proponents include the NFIB Ohio and the Ohio Restaurant and Hospitality Alliance. The bill was delivered to Governor DeWine, however he exercised his veto authority, so the law will not go into effect.

### **Public Comment Legislation**

[House Bill 609](#) has been introduced by Representatives David Thomas and Meredith Craig. It would require all public bodies to allow public comment in their open meetings. The entities would be required to allow for public comment before taking formal action on any item. The body may provide reasonable restrictions on the length and nature of the comments. The body could also not require obtaining approval for providing comment. This bill is being considered by the House General Government Committee.

### **Allergen Disclosures Legislation**

Legislation has been reintroduced by Representatives Munira Abdullahi and Tom Young regarding food allergen disclosures on menus. [House Bill 364](#) would require all food service operations to denote on their menu (including menu boards) the food items that contain milk, eggs, fish, crustacean shellfish, tree nuts, peanuts, wheat, or soybeans. This bill has been referred to the House Agriculture Committee and there have been 2 hearings. At the proponent hearing on November 5<sup>th</sup>, the committee accepted an amendment to require chain restaurants to also provide sodium warnings on their menus. A chain restaurant would be one with more than 20 locations. The amendment was supported by the American Heart Association. At a 3<sup>rd</sup> hearing on February 25, 2026, the Ohio Restaurant and Hospitality Association testified in opposition to the bill.

### **Public Expenditure Data Base**

Legislation from Representatives Tom Young and Bob Peterson would require the creation of Ohio Local Government Expenditure Database. [House Bill 413](#) would require public entities to report expenditure and revenue data to the state and that information would be available to the public. This would be an expansion of the Ohio Checkbook that is used to track and report state expenditures. The following entities are required to participate: counties, cities, villages, townships, public libraries, park districts, school districts, regional water and sewer districts, and regional transit authorities. The bill was favorably reported by the House Technology and Innovation Committee. Because the bill contains an appropriation it will also need to be considered by the House Finance Committee.

**How to Contact Your Lobbyist** [Amanda Sines, Government Advantage Group, amanda@gov-advantage.com](mailto:amanda@gov-advantage.com)

# State Report and Audits

Bev Fisher







Good day! While most of your fairs are doing great at getting the reports done, some are still struggling and it appears to be from many different areas. Some are unsure of where to get some of the numbers and how to get them into the report while others are just not sure about how to provide an accurate cash reconciliation report. Provided you have been entering them correctly throughout the year in the correct category, you will be able to put them in the report correctly.

Please remember we are to be doing everything on a CASH basis not accrual. You should be reconciling your bank accounts monthly and providing your board with monthly financial reports. Auditors (whether with the State of Ohio or a private firm) are looking at all of your numbers when they come to audit your books every two years. Having an understanding of where your numbers come from helps you explain and justify your accounting practices.

Audits continue to be a challenge. Some are done without issues while others appear to be teaching sessions for those individuals doing the audit. I encourage you to keep all the paperwork in an orderly manner and have it ready when your auditor gives you the list of items they will need for your audit. Know that the OFMA is here to assist you, but we cannot totally do your record keeping for you. You are more than welcome to call and ask questions or if you have concerns. We welcome answering those questions throughout the year not just when the report is due to ODA or when the auditors knocks at your door.

Bev Fisher ([bfish527@gmail.com](mailto:bfish527@gmail.com))

## Ohio Agricultural Fairs Impact on the Local Economy Fair week

Ohio 2024   Annual Fairs High-Level Estimated Economic and Fiscal Impact							
		<25K Attendees	25K-100K Attendees	100K-200K Attendees	200K-500K Attendees	500K-1M Attendees	TOTAL
<b>Activity Volume</b> 							
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	
<b>Estimated Spending Volume</b> 							
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	
<b>Total Direct Spending:</b>	<b>\$53,591,858</b>	<b>\$186,957,435</b>	<b>\$143,843,104</b>	<b>\$142,130,288</b>	<b>\$240,953,965</b>	<b>\$767,476,650</b>	
<b>Economic Impact</b> 							
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	
<b>Total Economic Impact:</b>	<b>\$119,558,919</b>	<b>\$414,119,790</b>	<b>\$318,282,977</b>	<b>\$314,066,266</b>	<b>\$532,051,467</b>	<b>\$1,698,079,420</b>	
<b>Fiscal Impact</b> 							
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:	\$3,081,532	\$10,750,052	\$8,270,978	\$8,172,492	\$13,854,853	\$44,129,907	
<b>Total State Fiscal Impact:</b>	<b>\$3,081,532</b>	<b>\$10,750,052</b>	<b>\$8,270,978</b>	<b>\$8,172,492</b>	<b>\$13,854,853</b>	<b>\$44,129,907</b>	
<b>Activity Volume per Fair</b> 							
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!	

## 2026 Ohio Fairs' Queen Program Report

**Tim Massie Chairman**

Congratulations to Edy Solet from the Erie County Fair who was crowned the 2026 Ohio Fairs' Queen at the Grand General Session! Also, congratulations to all the young ladies who participated in our Ohio Fair's Queen activities. Seventy-nine of Ohio's best young fair representatives applied for the 2026 Ohio Fairs' Queen title and seventy-seven were able to participate.

Our activities began with an informal gathering on Wednesday evening, where the girls were able to get acquainted and, in some cases, re-acquainted with each other, have some fun with the activities, and pick up a few pointers on what to expect over the next few days. On Thursday morning five pairs of judges conducted a business type interview with their assigned group of contestants and selected three ladies from each group. The program continued into the afternoon with our rehearsal where the girls were assisted by members of the queen committee. Later Thursday evening the Ohio Fairs' Queen Pageant was held, and the fifteen semi-finalists were named. Each of the fifteen girls drew a question and was given one minute to respond. The judges met and named the top five finalists who were announced on the stage. Following this announcement, the five finalists were interviewed by all ten judges where the official final order was determined. Four or five of our past Ohio Fairs' Queens were able to attend and were invited to the stage where they introduced themselves.

Thank you, Amberly, for an outstanding year as the 2025 Ohio Fairs' Queen. Amberly represented the OFMA and our fairs in grand fashion and was able to visit ALL of Ohio's great fairs. We wish Amberly the very best in all her endeavors. She will always be a part of the OFMA family and on that note, we welcome Edy to the OFMA family! The queen committee will be meeting soon to review and evaluate the contest, rules, procedures, and application.

Thank you to the Eagle Golf Car Company, Bush Concessions, Otter's Concessions, Hacker Livestock, Fairs.com, Bush's Fairway Concessions, and Lisko Family Amusements for your financial support and sponsorship of this program. Thank you to each young lady who participated in our queen event and thank you to each fair who allowed your candidate to attend and for supporting them. Thank you to my fellow queen committee members for all their help in making this event possible. Thank you to the ten judges who graciously gave of their time to review the applications and sitting in on a morning of interviews all the way through the final selection of the queen and her court. And thank you to everyone in the OFMA family who helped make the event successful. Every county and independent fair is encouraged to send their queen representative to participate in the program. As always, we have tried to make this opportunity educational, fun, and overall, a great experience for each of the young ladies. We hope to see every fair represented at the 2027 contest! Have a great and successful 2026 fair season!



## 2027 Spring Meetings

**Easter March 28**

**District 1&2 Saturday Lunch April 3 Mercer County Fair**

**District 5&9 Sunday Lunch April 4 Millersburg**

**District 7&8 Saturday Dinner April 10 TBD**

**District 3-4-6 Sunday Lunch April 11 Washington Courthouse Lunch**



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101st Annual

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## Ohio State Fair

Saturday General Session

Junior Fair Sessions

## Fairs.com

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## Fairground Solutions Division of ESL Technologies

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## Nutrien Ag Solutions

Communication Awards

Convention Catalog

## Ohio Soybean Council

Saturday General Session Speaker

## Bates Brothers Amusements

Corn Hole Tournament and Snacks

Extravaganza Snacks

## Durant Amusements

Hall of Fame Awards

## Kolar Concessions

Friday Evening Jr. Fair Early Arrival Food & Games

## Lisko Family Amusements

Associates, Guests, and Spouse Drawing

First Time Attendees' Meeting

## Talley Amusements, Inc.

ODA Breakfast

## Variety Attractions

Extravaganza-Gala

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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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*The OFMA encourages our member fairs to please utilize these sponsors and our service members for their fair needs.*



# Important Links & Dates Ohio Fair Managers 2026-2027

Ohio Attorney General Public Records (800) 282-0515 or (614) 466-2872

Link: [www.OhioAttorneyGeneral.gov/Sunshine-Laws](http://www.OhioAttorneyGeneral.gov/Sunshine-Laws)

Ohio Fairs Redbook Link: On ODA Website Fairs Division <https://agri.ohio.gov/wps/portal/gov/oda/divisions/amusement-ride-safety-and-fairs/resources/redbook>

## Important Dates

### OFMA Conference Jan 7-10, 2027

**Ohio Fairs Hall of Fame Submission Deadline October 20,**

**Communication Awards Deadline October 20**

**Ohio Fair Queen Applications Due November 30**

**Conference Registration Early Bird November 30 \$75**

**Postmarked or entered December 1 or later \$100**

**PLEASE VERIFY YOUR OFFICE STAFF &  
OFFICERS FOR THOSE DATA FIELDS**

**Registration Site will include guest events, reverse raffle tickets, Event tickets, and more,**

**OFMA Office will e-mail officers when site goes live.**

**Junior Fair Registration December 1**

### Ohio Department of Agriculture Dates

**2027 Fair Dates Form October 30**

**2027 Fair Fund Request Form October 30**

**2026 Outstanding Fair Supporter October 30**

**Fairs 2026 Election Poll Books 10 days after the Election and Bylaws if applicable**

**2026 Annual Financial Annual Report Due no later than Friday  
January 8, 2027 ODA will have an office in the Nationwide Rooms**

2027 Spring Meetings Easter 2027 is March 28

District 1&2 Saturday Lunch April 3 Mercer County Fair Grounds

District 5&9 Sunday Lunch April 4 Holmes County Fairgrounds

District 7-8 Saturday Dinner April 10 TBD

District 3-4-6 Sunday Lunch April 11 Washington Courthouse Lunch

Future Conference Dates (Thurs-Sun) January 5-8, 2028 January 4-7, 2029

## **Ohio Fair Managers Association**

**P. O. Box 2625 Stow, Ohio 44224**

**Howard Call CFE, Executive Director**

**Theresa Call, Office Administrator e-mail: [ohiofairs@att.net](mailto:ohiofairs@att.net)**

**Website: [www.ohiofairs.org](http://www.ohiofairs.org) ph: 330-208-0372**

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## Tornado Damage at the Hardin County Fairgrounds – Updates & Recovery Information

On the evening of March 26, 2026, an EF1 tornado touched down at the Hardin County Fairgrounds, causing significant damage across the grounds. Multiple buildings sustained damage, including the **Machinery Building, Poultry & Rabbit Building, Steak Barn, Arts & Crafts Building, Pork Producers Building, Maintenance Shop, Roundhouse, Grandstand, Goshen Barn, and Youth and Ag Center.** Several power lines and poles are also down. The fairgrounds is currently closed while insurance assessments are underway. Staff are working remotely and can be reached by phone or email.

The Hardin County Fair Board wants the community to know: **the 2026 Hardin County Fair will happen. We will rebuild.**



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**Director-Ohio Governmental Program**

**Thomas Welsh**

**E-mail to: [twelsh@acrisure.com](mailto:twelsh@acrisure.com)**

**Website: [www.acrisure.com/greatlakes](http://www.acrisure.com/greatlakes)**

# Don't Forget to Do Your Long-Range Planning

Kim Meyers, OFMA Director at Large

It is hard to believe we are rapidly approaching the mid-way point of 2026, and fair season will soon be in full swing. Hopefully, everyone has made it an annual priority to sit down with your full board of directors to plan and discuss “where you want to go and how you are going to get there.”

It is highly recommended that you put together a plan, listing all of the projects you need to do, and all of the projects you would like to do in future. Several things your plan should include are maintenance of your existing grounds and buildings, renovations, reconstruction, new construction, the purchase of new equipment, upgrading your offices with new technology and equipment, and the number of full-time and part-time employees you will need to get things done. As our fairs take on more and more off-season activities and events, special attention should be made to planning how many more employees and volunteers will be needed to handle all of the additional work.

With regard to “how you are going to get there”, preparing a budget is absolutely necessary and will be critical to your success. Before you can do all of the things you need to do now and all of the future things you want to do, you need to know the cost of all of these things and formulate a plan on how you are going to fund them. In most cases, the profits we make from our fairs and off-season activities will be insufficient to fund major reconstruction and new construction projects. We will, therefore, have to search for funding from outside sources, such as county commissioners, the Ohio Department of Commerce, the ODA, the FDA, private businesses, grants, donations, and charitable organizations. Start early in planning how to apply for and obtain the funds necessary for your large projects. Follow the advice of the OFMA and put together a plan to contact and get to know your legislators, elected officials and community leaders. Invite these folks to your fairs and off-season events, and take them out for breakfast or lunch. Early planning on how you are going to fund your projects will be critical to your success.

Wishing you success in everything you do, along with blue skies and record crowds for 2026!

*Kim*



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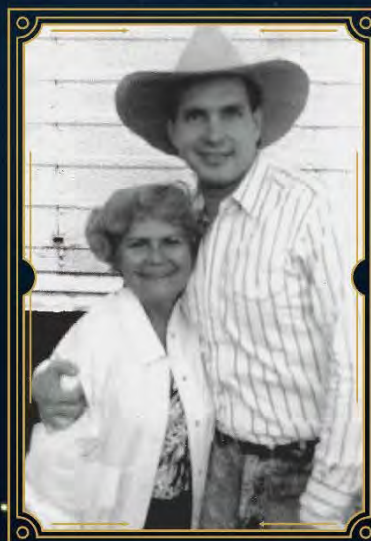


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