



Alaska State Fair

2021 ANNUAL REPORT



Friends of the Fair,

After a one-year hiatus due to the pandemic, the Alaska State Fair was back in full swing last year, with guests returning to the fairground for a jam-packed schedule of Fair fun. We were so excited to be back, celebrating with our fellow Alaskans once again.

The 2021 Fair, themed Seeing is Believing, featured sold out concerts and events, multiple state crops records, and record-setting proceeds from the youth livestock auction. Both our 2021 attendance and concert ticket sales were up from 2019, indicating that Alaskans were ready to gather and enjoy a good time together.

The 2021 Fair took place August 20 – September 6 over an extended 14-day schedule intended to help spread out crowds and keep everyone as safe as possible. The new three-weekend schedule was well-received by all, from fairgoers to vendors.

We took other pandemic-related health safety measures, including encouraging fairgoers to purchase parking and admission tickets in advance online; providing additional handwashing and sanitizing stations; cleaning and disinfecting regularly; encouraging fairgoers to wear face masks in congested areas and social distance where possible; and asking patrons to stay home if sick or experiencing symptoms.

Outside of Fair-time, events like our Holiday Bazaar returned, with some modifications to maximize health safety, while others, like our Mighty Monster Boo Fest, were unfortunately postponed. We look forward to hosting all of our events in 2022.

In winter 2021, we were pleased to continue popular traditions like the Bright Up the Night holiday lights display, and introduce new ones like the Ice Maze, which drew community members to the fairgrounds throughout the darkest, coldest months of the year.

We remained focused on forwarding the educational aspect of our mission, awarding scholarships to help five Alaska high school students pursue their higher education aspirations. You can read more about these efforts and more in the pages of our 2021 annual report.

We are grateful and happy that everyone was able to join us at the Alaska State Fair in 2021. We hope the return of a familiar end-of-summer tradition gave you joy and happiness, making memories for years to come. We look forward to celebrating with you again in 2022!




Kristy Bernier, President


Jerome Hertel, CEO



OUR MISSION

Produce a traditional State Fair which educates and entertains Fairgoers; Provide stable finances through good business practices, statewide outreach, partnerships, and hosting a variety of community, cultural and business events.



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2021 Alaska State Fair

Ready for Fair Fun

The 2021 Fair was back in full force, with the fun spread over 14 days as a pandemic precaution, in addition to other safety measures taken to protect fairgoers, vendors, entertainers, staff and volunteers. Alaskans showed up with enthusiasm, and our attendance exceeded pre-pandemic numbers, with a total attendance of 305,428, up from 303,989 in 2019.

Fairgoers showed they were ready for a great time, too. A total of 33,313 concert-goers enjoyed 2021 AT&T Concert Series entertainment, up from 30,520 in 2019, and there wasn't an empty seat in the house at the Jon Pardi and Billy Idol shows. The rough and tumble Demolition Derby and all three adrenaline-packed All Star Monster Truck shows also sold out.

We brought 3,100 entertainers to the Fair in 2021, representing both local talent and international superstars. We made sure to offer plenty of fun free with Fair admission, providing value to our fairgoers.

New Thrills

As we are always looking to expand and improve the experience for fairgoers, we were excited to introduce a new carnival ride at the 2021 Fair: the Aftershock rollercoaster, presented by Golden Wheel Amusements. The Aftershock is the largest roller coaster in Alaska, featuring 1,181 feet of twists and turns, drops of 25 feet, and a top speed of 35 MPH. Unlike rides that travel around the state, the Aftershock is featured exclusively at the Alaska State Fair, and has a permanent location on the fairgrounds.

Pitching In

Making our community a better place is a cornerstone of our values, and reducing the waste at Alaska's largest event is one way we do that. Volunteers collected a total of 57,326 pounds, or 28.7 tons, of recyclable material at the 2021

Fair, diverting cardboard, aluminum cans, plastic, mixed paper and steel cans from the landfill.

Showing Off and Setting Records

Part of what makes the Fair so special is the involvement of our fellow Alaskans. Each year, our exhibits department invites people from across the state to show off their talents by entering exhibits in a wide range of areas. At the 2021 Fair, we had a total of 6,488 total entries, including 1,808 flowers entries, 1,043 crops entries, and 615 arts and crafts entries.

In the crops department, five new state records were set, including:

- Garlic, .380 pounds, grown by Deb Blaylock of Palmer
- Pepper – hot, 15 ¼" long, grown by Deb Blaylock of Palmer
- Strawberry, .115 pounds, grown by Ken Blaylock of Palmer
- Fennel, 11 pounds, grown by Theresa Phillips of Palmer
- Long gourd, 128 7/8", grown by Dale Marshall of Anchorage

The 2021 Fair also featured the 25th annual Giant Cabbage Weigh-Off and the 15th annual Midnight Sun Great Pumpkin Weigh-Off. Winners of the cabbage weigh-off included:

- First place, 86.15 pounds, grown by Brian Shunskis of Salcha
- Second place, 77.95 pounds, grown by Keevan Dinkel of Wasilla
- Third place, 62.4 pounds, grown by Warren Keogh of Chickaloon

Dale Marshall of Anchorage took first place in the pumpkin weigh-off with a 1,603.5-pound entry.





Produce a traditional State Fair which educates and entertains Fairgoers. . .

Total attendance:

305,428

New state records:

5

Recyclables collected:

57,326 lbs.

Sold-out events:

4

Concert goers:

33,313

Sold-out concerts:

2

Exhibit entries:

6,488

New carnival rides:

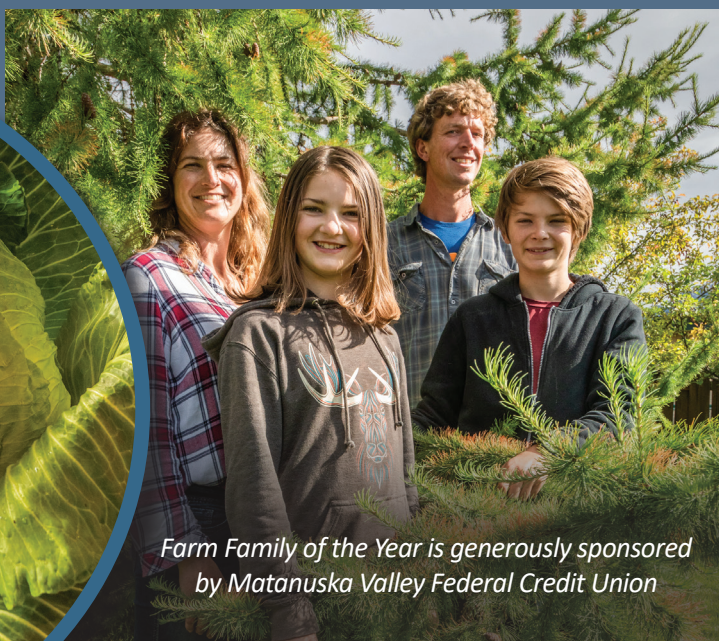
1

Entertainers:

3,100

Volunteers:

750



Encouraging Future Farmers

We especially love the involvement of youth at the Fair. At the 2021 4-H Junior Market Livestock Auction, young future farmers showed and sold a total of 82 animals that they had raised themselves. Their efforts brought in \$352,000, setting a new auction record.

2021 Farm Family of the Year

We were pleased to celebrate Alaska's 2021 Farm Family of the Year: Allie Barker and Jed Workman of Chickaloon. Allie and Jed are the owners and operators of Chugach Farm, where they grow nutrient-dense food through sustainable and regenerative methods with a focus on living self-sufficiently.

The Farm Family of the Year award was established in 2000 by the Alaska Division of Agriculture and the Fair, with the intent to honor an Alaska farm family that best epitomizes the spirit of the industry that year, and to show appreciation for hard-working Alaskans committed to agriculture.

Farm Family of the Year is generously sponsored by Matanuska Valley Federal Credit Union

Throughout the Year...



... and hosting a variety of community, cultural and business events.

The Alaska State Fair is about much more than a 14-day, once-a-year event. Our mission encompasses education, statewide outreach, partnerships and hosting a variety of community, cultural and business events. This commitment can be seen in our efforts throughout the year and throughout the community.

A Mission to Educate

“Educate” is a key part of our mission, and as part of this focus area, we are pleased to award annual scholarships to Alaska high school students. In 2021, we awarded a total of \$6,000 to five students preparing to embark on the next phase of their educational journey.

Our 2021 scholarship recipients included:
\$2,500 first-place recipient, Veia Tungul
\$1,500 second-place recipient, Lillian Bleeker
\$1,000 third-place recipient, Katherine Payne
\$500 honorable mention recipient, Kylie Mullaly
\$500 honorable mention recipient, Jillian Holland

Spreading Holiday Cheer

Community members were once again able to get a jumpstart on their holiday shopping at our annual

Holiday Bazaar, which took place over two weekends instead of one, and required preregistration due to pandemic precautions.

Our 2021 holiday light display offered the community a bright spot in the midst of a dark, cold winter. Bright Up the Night, Alaska’s largest drive-through holiday light display, returned to the fairgrounds for a 29-night run, starting on Thanksgiving and ending New Year’s Day. From the warmth and comfort of their vehicles, hundreds of guests drove through almost a mile of festive light displays while enjoying the holiday music broadcast synced directly to their radio.

We also continued our partnership with The Christmas Factory, which we were once again pleased to host on the fairgrounds.

A-Mazing New Attraction

New this year, the fairgrounds hosted another family-friendly, wintertime attraction: The Ice Maze. Guests to the maze navigated through a labyrinth of winding pathways, surrounded by solid ice formations created by artist Cory Livingood.

...Throughout the Community



Rebarchek Agricultural Park

Rebarchek Farm, developed by original colony farmer Ray Rebarchek, is one of the first colonist farms in the Mat-Su Valley and is on the National Register of Historic places. As owners of the remaining Rebarchek property, the Fair is preserving the history of agriculture in Alaska and the Mat-Su Valley, and providing land and education opportunities for sustaining agriculture now and in the future.

In 2021, significant historical restorations continued, including an original colony barn reestablished on the property. Groundwork was also set for the addition of a community-use agriculture education center, expected to open in 2022. This year will also see activation of a living history farm, providing current and future farmers with hands-on agriculture and animal husbandry education, training and experimentation opportunities. A separate food forest is also planned.

These efforts are moved forward through special partnerships and programs developed with local youth organizations, the agricultural community, the Rebarchek family and local historical organizations.

Youth Development Program

The Rebarchek Agricultural Park has designated land and structures specifically for youth activities and partnerships with 4-H, FFA, tribal and other youth-oriented organizations and programs.

By providing hands-on agricultural and animal husbandry activities, and adult mentorship opportunities, youth are introduced to agriculture as a possible field to pursue for their future. Youth-focused activities in 2021 included:

- An agricultural and historical education event through Campfire for 215 elementary-age students and their camp counselors. A Palmer Historical Council representative assisted with historical site tours.
- Private pre-school educational visits, where 200 youth and their accompanying guardians participated in activities including digging potatoes, feeding chickens, goat milking demonstrations, and planting peas.
- Monthly educational visits for homeschool families, - Rebarchek Agricultural Park internships. During weekly visits, interns learned about goat husbandry and dairy education, poultry and egg production, and received a general overview of the historical farm.

Showing Appreciation for Our Supporters



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2021 Alaska State Fair

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Bright Up the Night

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Credit Union
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State of Alaska Department of
Fish & Game
Capstone Clinic
KMBQ

“... through good business practices, statewide outreach, partnerships ...”

■ ■ ■ Sponsor Spotlight: AT&T



For the past 25 years, AT&T has been an essential piece of the Fair's success. During AT&T's decades of dedicated involvement with the Fair, we've seen the faces of fairgoers enjoying entertainment at the AT&T tent or gazing up at the fireworks displays. We've watched concertgoers dance and sing along with their favorite bands as part of the AT&T Concert Series. We've experienced wonder through the eyes of a child at the AT&T Wild Science Program, and witnessed families celebrating the holiday season at the Bright Up the Night holiday lights display.

These are just a handful of examples of how AT&T has demonstrated their support of their Alaska community as a Fair sponsor. As we reflect on our long-standing partnership, we extend a sincere, heartfelt thank you to AT&T for their support, and look forward to many more years to come.

Saying Goodbye to a Good Friend

The Fair lost a living legend last October when Hobo Jim passed away after a brief battle with an aggressive cancer. His music has touched the lives of countless fairgoers over the past four decades, from youngsters singing along with every word of the Iditarod Trail song to their grandparents listening with nostalgic smiles to songs like “My Ol’ Tractor” and “Catalog Dreams”. He could take Sluicebox audiences seamlessly from howling at the top of their lungs one minute, to dancing with their favorite “Backwoods Girl” the next, to laughing about “Fishin’ For Chickens”, or simply sitting quietly and listening to stories written about people like Woody Guthrie, Joe Redington, and the “Educated Man”. In his 27 years as the official Alaska State Balladeer, Hobo Jim wrote songs that Alaskans from all walks of life could relate to on a deeply personal level – songs for fishermen, loggers, miners, trappers, trackers, dog mushers, homesteaders, and cowboys. He possessed an uncanny gift for crafting songs that became almost instant “covers” and the requests you’d hear at his shows were nearly always for one of his own original tunes. Hobo Jim’s presence will be sorely missed here at the Fair, but his memory will live on through his timeless music for generations to come, and we will be planning ways to commemorate the life and memory of this Alaskan legend, our friend Hobo Jim.



1952 - 2021

Cultivating Smiles for 2022



2022 Alaska State Fair

The Alaska State Fair will once again take place over three weekends in 2022. We'll open the gates Friday, August 19, and the fun continues through Monday, September 5. During the 14-day schedule, we'll be open daily except for Tuesdays and Wednesdays. Keep an eye on alaskastatefair.org for updates!

Holiday Bazaar

Get your Holiday shopping done early! Browse beautifully crafted gifts from over 100 vendors. Join us Saturday and Sunday, October 22-23!

Mighty Monster Boo Fest

We are excited to host the 2022 event on Saturday, October 29! Mark your calendars for a frightfully fun evening of costumes, music, food and craft beer.



(907) 745-4827

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