

# ALASKA STATE FAIR

2024 Annual Report



A PRIVATE NONPROFIT 501 (C)(3) CORPORATION



## A message from the FAIR'S BOARD PRESIDENT

On behalf of the Alaska State Fair, Inc. Board of Directors, I am once again delighted—yes, delighted!—to present the 2024 annual report, offering a nostalgic glance at last year and a hopeful peek into the future.

If we had to sum up 2024 in one word, it would be happy—because that's exactly how we felt seeing a record-breaking 370,000 attendees walk through our gates. Concerts at the Borealis were a hit, with several selling out (turns out, people really love good music). We were thrilled to welcome so many guests and even happier that most of them left with full bellies, great memories and maybe just a little bit of Fair dust in their shoes.

At the heart of everything we do is our mission—to educate, entertain and bring the community together. And because we like to overachieve, we keep finding ways to make the Fair even better. More attractions, more experiences and more things included with your admission—because who doesn't love getting more for their money? Rest assured, we'll continue working to make your Fair experience richer, livelier and more unforgettable (in the best way).

As we charge ahead, we must also look back—at our roots, our history and the traditions that made this Fair what it is today. The board and staff remain dedicated to honoring that legacy while embracing fresh ideas (the good ones, at least) to ensure the Alaska State Fair keeps thriving for generations to come.

The Alaska State Fair is, and always will be, the Gem of the Valley—a tradition worth celebrating, protecting and growing. Thank you all for the years of support, laughter and memories. It's been one heck of a ride.



John Harkey, Board President

FAIR BOARD OF DIRECTORS



Left to Right: Jon-Marc Petersen, Director; Aryne Randall, Treasurer; Jason Ortiz, Vice-President; William Fischer, Director; Cody Beus, Secretary; John Harkey, President; Carol Kenley, Director

# Greetings from the FAIR'S CEO

I am so grateful to the Alaska State Fair organization for the trust given to me with the full backing of its Board of Directors. Now in my second full year at the helm, I feel the awesome responsibility bestowed on me and our fantastic staff to produce a world-class State Fair, and also be good stewards of the fairgrounds. Collectively, we achieved a great deal of success in 2024, notably record Fair attendance and a healthy balance sheet. The present-day Alaska State Fair benefits from an event brand started 89 years ago, which has added more depth and popularity with each passing decade.



At the heart of my role and success this past year is a talented and dedicated team of staff, contractors and volunteers who work tirelessly to meet our goals. I am so thankful to have inherited a tenured group of staff members who care deeply about Alaska, and take the role of celebrating Alaska's people and culture personally when we open the State Fair to the world.

In closing, I want to reinforce our nonprofit mission to produce a traditional State Fair which educates and entertains Fairgoers. The Alaska State Fair continues to thrive without reliance on state funds and other resources. Every dollar is independently generated and appropriately reinvested back into the organization, both in physical infrastructure form and through further enhancements to the Fair itself. I am so proud to be the CEO of the Alaska State Fair and am excited about the future. Success is something not taken for granted but earned through the efforts of many. I just have the helm in my hand to lead us. It's an honor to do so!

  
Jeff Curtis, CEO



**Vision:** Alaska State Fair Inc. provides a center for the Alaskan community to gather in a dynamic and safe atmosphere throughout the year.

**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.

## ALASKA STATE FAIR STAFF

**Jeff Curtis, CEO**

**Kirsten Mason,**  
*Sr. Director of Finance  
& Ticketing*

**Kelly Larson, Sr. Director**  
*of Community & Corporate  
Partnerships*

**Larry Longnecker,**  
*Grounds & Maintenance  
Director*

**Melissa Keefe (MK),**  
*Director of Marketing &  
Communications*

**Jerry Baker, Administrative**  
*Services Manager*

**Suzy Crosby,**  
*Entertainment Manager*

**Sheri Musgrave, Beverage**  
*& Events Manager*

**Rachel Schoonover,**  
*Vendor Manager*

**Jake Mattes, IT &**  
*Systems Manager*

**Sierra Butler, FEC &**  
*Grandstand Manager*

**Anna Rowe, Creative**  
*Marketing Manager*

**Lara Stanley, Exhibits**  
*Manager*

**Becky Myrvold, Head**  
*Gardener*

**Chad Wallace, Grounds**  
*Supervisor*

**Sara Post, Events**  
*Coordinator*

**Chelsea Dischner,**  
*Entertainment Assistant*

**Kai Tantaros,**  
*Administrative Assistant*

**Donnie Leonard,**  
*Maintenance Technician*

**Randy Leonard,**  
*Maintenance Technician*

**Jason Hitesman,**  
*Maintenance Technician*

**Kyle Williams,**  
*Landscaping Assistant*

**Kristy Haddock,**  
*Sponsorship Coordinator*



# ALASKA STATE FAIR

*Aug 16 - Sept 2, 2024*



Since 1936, the Alaska State Fair has been at the heart of our community, bringing people together to celebrate agriculture, education, sustainability and time-honored traditions.

As one of the nation's few self-sustaining nonprofit fairs, we are committed to creating an exceptional experience, not just at our annual event, but year-round—and for years to come.

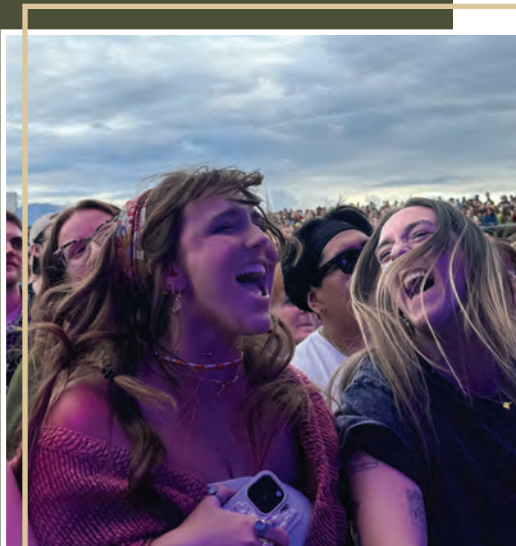
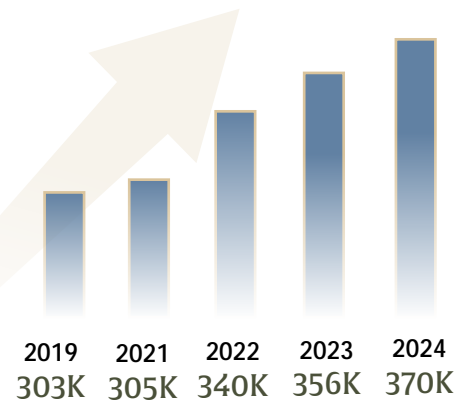
Our impact extends far beyond the fairgrounds, with a record-breaking \$50.9 million economic impact in 2024, up from \$21 million in 2014. By putting on successful Fairs, we are able to reinvest in future events and our community at large.

With growing attendance, ever-expanded programming and ongoing capital improvements, we continue to evolve while staying true to our roots. With a focus on sustainability and innovation, we strive to honor Alaska's spirit and legacy for generations to come.

## ENJOYING THE RIDE: RECORD-BREAKING ATTENDANCE

In 2024, we once again welcomed visitors from near and far for an unforgettable end-of-summer celebration—showcasing the best of our state through entertainment, music, food, carnival rides, agriculture, culture, contests and more.

The 2024 Fair truly lived up to its theme, Enjoy the Ride, as a record number of fairgoers made their way to the fairgrounds in Palmer from August 16 to September 2. This year, 370,485 fairgoers enjoyed the festivities, surpassing last year's attendance of 356,179.



## MUSIC TO EVERYONE'S EARS: 2024 CONCERTS

The ConocoPhillips Alaska Concert Series was a major draw to the 2024 Fair, with a record number of concertgoers and five sold-out shows. With a focus on offering something for everyone, our 2024 concert series featured a wide range of musical genres—from country, rock and reggae, to pop, indie and a cappella.

## SHOWCASING ALASKA'S BEST

We are not just a Fair—we're a tribute to what makes Alaska extraordinary, built by and for the people who call it home. That is showcased in many ways including Fair exhibits, where entrants display their skills and competitive spirit in a wide range of categories. In 2024, fairgoers submitted a total of 7,660 exhibits, up from 7,506 in 2023.

## SUSTAINING THE FAIR, AND THE FUTURE!

At the Fair, sustainability isn't just a goal—it's a commitment. Through the Alaska State Fair Recycles initiative, we continued our efforts in 2024, collecting an impressive 31.7 tons of aluminum, plastic, paper, steel and cardboard. Since the program began in 2002, we've successfully diverted 469.8 tons of recyclable materials from landfills, helping to keep our state clean and green. By working together, we're ensuring a more sustainable future for the Fair and our community!

## FEEDING THE COMMUNITY, ONE FAIR AT A TIME

Food brings us together, and at the Fair, that spirit extends beyond the fairgrounds. In 2024, we teamed up with the Mat-Su Food Bank for a successful food drive, collecting approximately 7,000 pounds of canned goods to help those in need. But the giving didn't stop there—434 pounds of fresh vegetables from crop exhibits and over 300 pounds of produce from the Fair gardens also made their way to the Food Bank.

Even our state's wildlife got a share of the bounty! Another ton of vegetables from crop exhibits was donated to the Alaska Zoo and Wildlife Conservation Center, ensuring a nutritious treat for the animals. And thanks to the efforts of That Thing Goin' On, flowers from the Fair gardens found new homes at local businesses and organizations, spreading beauty and joy throughout the community.



## FARM FAMILY OF THE YEAR

During the Fair, Bruce and Vickie Bush of Palmer were recognized as the 2024 Farm Family of the Year. The Bush family, owners of Bushes Bunches, a family-run farm and produce stand, have been a vital part of Alaska's agricultural community since 1956. They were recognized on the 25th anniversary of the annual award, established by the Department of Natural Resources' Division of Agriculture and the Fair to honor an Alaska Grown farm family that best epitomizes the spirit of the industry, and to showcase hard-working Alaskans committed to agriculture.



## GROWING LEGENDS: CROP ENTRIES & SPECIAL CONTESTS

In the crops division, a total of eight new state records were set at the 2024 Fair:

Catnip: 5' 4 1/2", Rita Gelino-Bequette

Buckwheat: 45 5/8", Sandy Skaggs

Bunching Onion: 1.76", Theresa Phillips

Garlic: 0.43 lbs - Theresa Phillips

Mushroom (Puffball): 33.84 lbs, Barry Siltman

Mustard Greens: 3.00 lbs, Krystyna McRobert

Rhubarb: 2.58 lbs, Roger Francisco

Tomato Plant: 25' 9 7/8", Theresa Phillips

Special exhibits contests included the ever-popular Alaska's Midnight Sun Great Pumpkin Weigh-Off and Giant Cabbage Weigh-Off.

### 18th Midnight Sun Great Pumpkin Weigh-Off

1st place: 2,035 lbs, Dale Marshall of Anchorage

2nd place: 734 lbs, Seth & Silas Dinkel of Wasilla

### 28th Annual Giant Cabbage Weigh-Off

1st place: 97.35 lbs, Scott Robb of Palmer

2nd place: 82.50 lbs, Paul Dinkel of Wasilla

3rd place: 79.65 lbs, Keevan Dinkel of Wasilla



## ■ 4-H JUNIOR MARKET LIVESTOCK AUCTION

The heart of the Fair has always been agriculture, and no one embodies that spirit better than Alaska's young farmers! Each year, dedicated 4-H youth put in the hard work of raising animals for the 4-H Junior Market Livestock Auction—and every year, they raise the bar even higher.

In 2024, they broke records once again, with the auction bringing in an impressive \$589,306 through the sale of 141 animals—a big jump from last year's \$510,000 and 107 animals. From chickens and turkeys to swine, lamb and beef, these young agriculturalists showcased their passion, commitment and skill, while the community's growing support for the program proves just how much Alaskans believe in the future of farming.

### RAISING THE BAR

2024:	\$589,306 (141 Animals)
2023:	\$510,000 (107 Animals)
2022:	\$419,957 (91 Animals)
2021:	\$352,000 (82 Animals)
2020:	\$185,000



## RETURN OF THE FAIR TRAIN

The Fair and the Alaska Railroad were excited to partner on the return of the popular Fair train in 2024, marking the first time since 2019 that the Fair train pulled into the fairground depot. The Fair train ran the last weekend of the 2024 Fair, offering a fun, relaxing and memorable experience, allowing fairgoers to forget about driving and parking and just focus on having a good time with friends and family.

## GROWING CREATIVITY: MAGIC TRAIN LIVING DISPLAY

The Alaska State Fair Magic Train, a stunning mosaiculture display at Pioneer Plaza, didn't just bring smiles to the faces of fairgoers—it also brought home several international awards! The living train, dreamed up by longtime Fair head gardener Becky Myrvold, took months to build and earned top honors at the International Association of Fairs & Expositions (IAFE), including first place in Competitive Exhibits - Creative Display Photo Series and Best of Division.

In addition to the train's awards, the Fair also earned first place IAFE honors for our television commercial and second place for our commemorative poster, designed by artist Nikki Niedringhaus.



### Thank you to our Rebarchek contributors:

Erik Anderson, Antique Power Club - Rich Grenno, Steve Brown, COHO Construction, Sheri Hamming - Palmer Historical Society, Sharon Hein, Barbra Howard, Knik Tribal Council, Northland Pioneer Grange - Brad and Lori, Palmer FFA, Elena Priekin, Rod Rongstad, Fran Seager-Boss, Jeff Smeenk - Palmer Soil & Water Conservation District, Dan Smith, Barbara Stanfill, Dana White - Anchorage Soil & Water Conservation District.





## ROOTED IN HISTORY, GROWING THE FUTURE: REBARCHEK FARM

In 2024, we continued our commitment to revitalizing the historic Rebarchek Farm, a cornerstone of Alaska's agricultural heritage. Originally developed by colony farmers Ray and Edna Rebarchek, this farm stands as one of the first colonist farms in the Mat-Su Valley and is proudly listed on the National Register of Historic Places. As stewards of this landmark, we are dedicated to preserving its legacy, fostering agricultural education, and promoting sustainable farming for future generations.

This year, Rebarchek Agricultural Farm hosted a variety of hands-on community agriculture classes, helping Alaskans connect with their farming roots. Participants learned the essentials of cold-climate gardening, honed their skills for growing a prize-winning cabbage, and even explored the ins and outs of raising backyard chickens—including a little chicken psychology!

Beyond education, Rebarchek Farm continues to serve as a scenic meeting and event space, staying true to its agricultural heritage while evolving as a vital resource for our community.

## YEAR-ROUND AROUND THE GROUNDS

The fairgrounds host a variety of popular events throughout the year. For example, in 2024, the annual Holiday Bazaar took place over two weekends in October, helping Alaskans get a head start on their holiday shopping with a wide range of gifts and more than 100 vendors.

The Halloween-time Mighty Monster BooFest, endorsed by the Brewers Guild of Alaska, once again gave beer-lovers the opportunity to sample brews from across Alaska and around the world, while enjoying a range of food, live music, a Halloween costume contest and silent auction.

Bright Up the Night, Alaska's largest drive-through holiday light display, was bigger and better than ever in 2024. With new, larger displays stretching across the fairgrounds, guests were able to enjoy nearly a mile of festive lights from the comfort of their vehicles, accompanied by holiday music broadcast directly to their radios.

The 2024 holiday season also saw the debut of the Yuletide Festival, a collaboration with the Christmas Factory. This old-fashioned Christmas celebration offered fun for all ages, featuring a carnival carousel, a slide, visits with Christmas elves, and a cozy bonfire. Attendees could sip on holiday drinks, enjoy festive food trucks, listen to live music, and take part in ornament decorating, coloring and Christmas-themed games. Well received in 2024, we will continue to expand on this new event during the 2025 holiday season.



# Thank You

We extend our sincere gratitude to all of our supporters, including our 2024 sponsors.



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Aurora Vending

Mat-Su Regional Medical Center

Combs Insurance

Pioneer Equipment

Wildflower Garden Club of Alaska



# Sponsor Spotlight: TOTE & LYNDEN TRANSPORT



## Celebrating a Remarkable Partnership: TOTE Maritime Alaska, Lynden Transport Alaska, and the Alaska State Fair

We are thrilled to celebrate our extraordinary partnership with TOTE Maritime and Lynden Transport, whose unwavering support has been instrumental in bringing world-class exhibits, dazzling holiday light displays and thrilling monster truck shows to the Alaska State Fair since 2017. Their dedication has significantly enriched the Fair experience, creating memorable moments for all ages.

### A Heartfelt Thank You

The Alaska State Fair applauds TOTE Maritime Alaska's legacy of service and Lynden Transport for connecting Alaska to the rest of the world. We extend our deepest gratitude to TOTE Maritime and Lynden Transport for their unwavering support and dedication to the Alaska State Fair. Their contributions have not only enhanced the Fair but have also strengthened our community, bringing joy and excitement to Fair guests. We look forward to many more years of this successful partnership, continuing to create unforgettable experiences together.

## Enhancing the Fair Experience

Through their generous sponsorship, TOTE Maritime and Lynden Transport have enabled us to host spectacular events that draw visitors from all over Alaska. Notable highlights include:

- World of Music Exhibit: Bringing the joy and diversity of music to Fair visitors.
- Age of Dinosaurs Exhibit: Offering an educational and thrilling journey into the prehistoric world.
- Princess Diana Exhibition: A touching tribute to the beloved Princess.
- World of Giant Insects and Butterfly Encounter: Fascinating exhibits that captivate and educate.
- Wild Science Exhibits: Engaging visitors with interactive and educational science displays.



Left to right: Jocelyn Montagne and Solveig Alcaraz (Teen Ambassadors), Lisa Lynch (Cultural Ambassador), Jennifer Cloud and Joanna Holland (Adult Ambassadors).

## ACKNOWLEDGING OUR AMBASSADORS

The Fair wouldn't be what it is without the incredible people who love and support it year after year! That's why we proudly continued our Fair Ambassador Program, recognizing our most loyal supporters and giving them a behind-the-scenes experience of the Fair.

In 2024, our ambassadors were celebrated at the Fair Director's Reception and had the chance to give back by volunteering at special events throughout the Fair. Their passion, energy and dedication help make the Fair a success, and we couldn't be more grateful.

## SUPPORTING ALASKA STUDENTS: FAIR SCHOLARSHIPS

Alaska high school students again demonstrated their dedication, dreams and drive through their 2024 Alaska State Fair scholarship applications. This year, we were thrilled to receive a record-breaking 65 applications, highlighting the bright future of Alaska's youth and the ever-growing need to support them on their educational journey. In 2024, we proudly presented \$8,000 in scholarships to six college-bound students:

- First place (\$3,000): Elizabeth Djajalie of Juneau
- Second place (\$2,000): Sophia Harper of Wasilla
- Third place (\$1,500): Ty Harmon of Palmer
- 4-H/FFA/Vendor award (\$500): Inga Peterson of Fort Wainwright
- 4-H/FFA/Vendor award (\$500): Matthew Fleischhacker of Chugiak
- Honorable mention (\$500): Mackenzie Betts of Chugiak

The Fair scholarships are open to all Alaska junior and senior high school students who plan to pursue college or vocational education.



LOOKING FORWARD TO 2025

# Join us FOR THE 2025 ALASKA STATE FAIR, THEMED REACH FOR THE STARS, AUGUST 15 TO SEPTEMBER 1!

## FREE PARKING RETURNS

Great news for fairgoers—general parking at the 2025 Fair will be FREE once again! After two successful years of easing traffic and speeding up parking, we're excited to continue offering this perk. Free on-site general parking will be available in the purple, red, yellow and brown lots, on a first-come, first-served basis each day of the Fair. Premier parking and camping will still be available for a fee.

## NEW FACILITIES IN 2025

We're always looking for ways to improve the fairgoer experience! As part of our 2025 capital improvements, we will be constructing a new multipurpose events center, with public restrooms, along the purple trail. Stay tuned for updates as this exciting project moves forward!

## OTHER 2025 EVENTS

**Stallions of The North:** *June 1*

**Holiday Bazaar:** *October 11&12 and 18 &19*

**Mighty Monster BooFest:** *October 25*

**Bright Up the Night:** *November/December, dates TBD*

**Yuletide Festival:** *December, dates TBD*

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