



**SANDUSKY COUNTY AGRICULTURAL SOCIETY, INC.**  
**“PRESERVING OUR FAIRGROUNDS FOR THE FUTURE OF OUR YOUTH”**  
**July, 2017**

---

**SANDUSKY COUNTY FAIR ~ A LOOK BACK**

The Sandusky County Fair has evolved over a 165-year period to meet the changing interests and needs of a broad range of constituents. These include agricultural producers, food processing and related companies, farm families, area youth, and the general public. The current grounds property was purchased in 1870, with the first fair being held there in 1871. Facilities and services have expanded over time, with early additions including horse, swine and sheep barns; the fine arts building; and Exhibitors’ Hall to host a growing number of exhibitions of interest to Fair attendees.

The Sandusky County Junior Fair was added in the 1950s as an opportunity for community youth to develop leadership skills through active participation in structured agricultural, civic, and social activities. Participation in the Junior Fair program is the culmination for annual projects in science, health, agriculture and citizenship available through 4-H, FFA, Campfire, Girl Scouts/Boy Scouts and the county schools. The Junior Fair Scholarship award program was introduced in 2013, with awards made annually to Junior Fair participants based upon quality of applications.

The North Street camp grounds was developed in the 1970s upon approval of the Ohio Department of Health, adding convenience for exhibitors and family recreational opportunities; and the Log Cabin area was first introduced in 1982, adding entertainment and social activities.

**TODAY’S FAIR HIGHLIGHTS:**

- 19 departments for exhibitor entries of livestock, poultry, farm products, canned goods, baked goods, needlework, floriculture, art, antiques, crafts, models and collectibles.
- A Junior Fair program of 16 exhibitor departments promoting career and leadership opportunities for youth.
- A week of activities crammed with entertainment in the Grand Stand and the Log Cabin Compound, livestock judging, a tractor pull, plenty of good fair food, and amusement rides and daily grounds attractions for the entire family.
- Exhibits and points of interest on the grounds that inform fairgoers of the area’s rich history.

In addition to fair week activities, the Fair Grounds is home to the Fremont Flea Market, the Fremont Speedway, Winter Wonderland, and public auctions hosted by Baker Bonnington; plus, the facilities are also rented throughout the year to individuals and organizations for receptions and other events. Due to its location on the northern boundary of the City of Fremont near the State Route 53/20/6 bypass, the Sandusky County Fairgrounds serves as a “Gateway to the City” for visitors from all directions.

The great variety of past accomplishments form the bedrock for future objectives ~ to continue to serve as a quality venue for community events that foster economic development, civic responsibility, and opportunity for personal growth. These values are incorporated in the Constitution of the Sandusky County Agricultural Society which identifies its purpose and mission as creating opportunities:

- To promote and encourage all wealth of thought and production;
- To be a school for progress;
- To develop and foster better citizenship, and
- To advance our cultural, agricultural and industrial interests.

With these objectives in mind, the Board has studied options for future growth, resources needed, and how these resources will allow us to accomplish our goals over the next three to five years.

### **CHALLENGES FACING THE SANDUSKY COUNTY AGRICULTURAL SOCIETY:**

The Sandusky County Fair is one of the finest of Ohio's 87 county fairs. The Fairgrounds is independently owned, receiving minimal local or state support and operated through the volunteer efforts of members of the board of directors, all donating hundreds of hours each year. While pleased with the long-term progress of the Fairgrounds, the Society's Board of Directors knows they must look to the future and respond to changes that are needed to keep the grounds adequate, safe, and secure to assure exhibitor, vendor and community involvement.

As costs have continued to increase, the Board has struggled to keep fees affordable for the public. This effort has often required delaying any but the most critical repairs and improvements. However, this mode of operation must change if the annual Fair and the Fairgrounds will exist in the future for our children and grandchildren. Key facility issues facing the board include water, sewer, and electrical upgrades; repaving and roofing; building construction/renovation; and camp site expansion.

The Fairgrounds generates revenues from fair activities and income from a variety of rental contracts; and it has maintained affordable fees, even in the face of higher costs for maintaining grounds and facilities. The time has come, however, when the challenges demand financial support in excess of the annual operating budget. For this reason, the Board is looking for support through nontraditional means. We now realize that making these improvements will require a fundraising campaign that is outside the traditional income from the Fair and off-season events. These projects will enable the Sandusky County Fair to continue its role in serving the community and educating the public about one of Ohio's major industries – Agriculture!

### **MEETING THE CHALLENGES:**

Through a series of planning meetings, the Board has developed a list of projects that will address immediate challenges and is requesting community support of the following investment goals:

#### **1. UTILITY UPGRADES**

**Cost:** \$310,000

**Benefits:** This will address the critical need for electrical upgrades: (1) 2 transformers for the campgrounds; (2) 4 stand-by transformers; (3) sheep barn upgrades; (4) rewiring of the flower building and the farm products building; and (5) changing fairgrounds lights to LED lighting. Water lines and

drainage systems will also be replaced in some sections of the fairgrounds. These upgrades will increase utility efficiency and longevity of systems.

## 2. REPAVING

**Cost: \$160,000**

**Benefits:** Repaving will increase safety and security for the fair grounds and camping areas. This includes two major initiatives: (1) complete repaving existing fairgrounds roads, approximately one mile in length; and (2) repaving of campground drives.

## 3. ROOFING PROJECTS

**Cost: \$230,000**

**Benefits:** The following projects will increase the value of buildings and improve security for items stored in the buildings: (1) replace roof on the beef barn; (2) paint the roofs on the crop and shop buildings, dairy barn, poultry building, and 4-H building; and (3) replace the maintenance shop building.

## 4. FACILITIES CONSTRUCTION/RENOVATION: JUNIOR FAIR/CAMPGROUND

**Cost:** \$300,000 in private support to construct a new horse barn on the main grounds, to convert the existing draft horse barn to a goat barn and to increase the number of campsites in the campground area.

**Benefits:** This will address three needs: (1) safety for exhibitors and attendees in that they will no longer need to cross North Street from the Junior Fair horse barn to the arena; (2) goats, the fastest growing species entered in the fair, will have their own barn; and (3) increase the availability of campsites for Fair participants.

## 5. ESTABLISHING A GROUNDS MAINTENANCE FUND

**Investment:** \$200,000 in support of a permanent maintenance fund for grounds and facility upkeep needs.

**TOTAL CAMPAIGN GOAL: \$1.2 MILLION**

## RECOGNITION

The initiatives proposed share a common goal: to preserve our Fairgrounds, rooted in the local community and focused on community needs, while looking ahead at the broader opportunities for youth. The Agricultural Society helps people for a lifetime. It is an organization that actually changes peoples' lives. Funds raised locally stay local. Investment in the Fairgrounds is a return on investment – for those who give and those who receive.

Recognition for investment in “Preserving Our Fairgrounds” will be based upon the preference of the individuals and organizations making the gift. Such recognition may include, with permission:

- Facility naming rights listed on the attached sheet.
- Public recognition in Agricultural Society publications.
- Recognition in annual celebratory events.
- Other avenues of recognition discussed with and approved by the donor.