

Columbia County Fair: It's All About Participation

There's nothing quite like an Oregon County Fair. Small and intimate in nature, you get a chance to see what is really great about rural Oregon. Kids raising animals, exhibits of some fine produce, displays of quilts and other fine craftsmanship and art.

It reminds us that sometimes there are more important things in life than Facebook and email, video games, television, and ipods. Sometimes it's a lot more interesting to get our hands dirty, get involved and participate.

The Columbia County Fair and Rodeo was held July 15-19 at the Columbia County Event

Complex in St. Helens. The theme was "Going Green" and recycling was a prominent part of that theme, with stations set up everywhere you looked, and entertainment that took us back-- all the way back to the six-

ties. There were carnival rides and Midway games, the Master Gardeners' beautiful display, 4-H kids showing off their livestock, including just about everyone's favorite-- baby goats!-- and, of course curly fries, lemon aide

and milkshakes from the Dairy Women. If you strolled around the grounds long enough you were sure to bump into someone you knew, whether your neighbor from around the corner, or a long-lost friend you haven't seen in years.

There was Senior Citizen Day on Wednesday. There was Kids Day on Thursday.

Goldie McJohn, original keyboard player with Steppenwolf-- those 60's icons responsible for *Born To Be Wild* and *Magic Car-*

pet Ride, entertained Thursday night. And, of course, there was the Rodeo, or should I say Rodeos. Thursday was the Just 4 Fun Rodeo for kids under nine; the Junior Rodeo for kids six to fourteen; the Exceptional Rodeo for special needs children, then the main event-- The

NPRA Rodeo on Friday and Saturday nights. Oh yeah, there were also the ATV and MX Rodeos on Sunday. Friday and Saturday nights, after the rodeo, everyone got down and Danced in the Dirt with the Concrete Cowboys. And Leilani Schmidt from Rainier was

named Columbia County Rodeo Queen for 2010 on Saturday night; Stephanie Esterly of Scappoose and Emily Simpson from St. Helens will be the Princesses in her court. First Runner-Up (and 2010 Flag

Team Captain) was Teri McGettigan from Warren. The Columbia Emergency Planning Association (CEPA) gave their annual demonstration by local public safety and Emergency responders on Saturday as well. Sunday was the Chili Cook-off.

The Columbia County Fair and Rodeo is all about participation, whether you just show up and buy some plants at the plant sale that benefits the Fair, or whether you enter a cake as an exhibitor. Everywhere you look are signs of regular folks getting involved. It's about being part

of a community that's bigger than just our own towns. And isn't that's what rural Oregon is all about?



Meghan & Lane Sullivan show their 4-H sheep.



Nicole Glass was Grand Champion Junior Showman with her cow, Stewey.

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