

Pure Americana at the Pacific County Fair

A cross-section of life in Menlo

By NATALIE ST. JOHN
EO Media Group

MENLO, Wash. — The opening night of the fair in late August was a perfect cross-section of life in Pacific County.

One political candidate stood at the entrance collecting tickets; another hustled past with an armful of election signs that he hoped to distribute to fairgoers.

All afternoon long, retirees kept an eye on the blue-ribbon collections of baked goods, flowers and mega-zucchini, while young agriculture students did their best to spiff up chickens, rabbits, pigs and cows for competition.

As the workday came to an end, families pulled into the dusty makeshift parking lot. They stopped to chat with friends and neighbors, while their children tugged at their hands in anticipation of the singular pleasures of a county fair: screeching carnival rides, dripping snow cones, balloon darts and barn animals.

At sunset, audience members in wobbly white plastic chairs watched as a “comedy hypnotist” did his best to entrance them, or at least make them laugh. A county commissioner stopped on his way across the fairground to mug with the three young beauties from the fair court, and clusters of teens flirted with one another in the bleachers behind the sherbet-colored exhibition halls. And everywhere, people ate food on sticks — everything from corn dogs to Rice Krispie treats to chunks of watermelon.

In the dairy barn, ‘tween and teen 4-H and Future Farmers of America members relaxed in lawn chairs that were placed perilously close to the business-end of two Jersey cows. Twelve-year-old Joey Schilter of Chehalis worked intently on covering a cardboard armature with one of the silver mylar emergency blankets from the county’s emergency preparedness booth, then placed it atop a wire frame. He explained that he was making a costume for his cow, Celebrity, because he planned to enter her in the upcoming animal costume contest. Excitedly, Joey explained that the object was a UFO, and jumped up from his lawn chair to demonstrate how it would sit atop Celebrity’s back. Once he’d added an alien and a tractor beam, he said, it would look like the cow was being sucked up into the Mother Ship.

Unfortunately, Celebrity wasn’t eager to play the role of an abductee. While Joey stood on tiptoe, trying his best to get the flying saucer into place, a group of teens giggled helplessly as Celebrity used her long tail to swat the flying saucer off of her back, again and again.

Undeterred, Joey said that he planned to make the whole costume from things he’d scrounged from around the fairgrounds. The armature for the saucer was constructed from a Donald Trump campaign sign, he said. When a reporter teasingly asked him if he’d stolen it off of someone’s lawn, Joey didn’t miss a beat.

“No, I took it off of the poop pile,” he quickly replied, gesturing toward the mound of manure behind the barn. “It’s crazy what people will do these days.”



Photos by Natalie St. John/EO Media Group
The fair got off to a rough start for student Matthew Flemetis’ sheep Lizzie, as she was the unwilling subject of a demonstration on shearing and grooming. Willapa Valley agriculture teacher Molly Majors was gentle and patient, but Lizzie was nonetheless relieved when her makeover was complete.



On the bench, Greg and Debra Blevins, of Raymond, Wash., left, and Becky Coblurn, of Lebam, watched other fair visitors and visited with friends and neighbors at the Pacific County Fair.



Jorden Nissell, 4, of Raymond, Wash., tried his luck at the balloon dart booth, while his mom shielded her eyes from the sun on the first day of the Pacific County Fair in Menlo, Wash.



Joey Schilter, 12, of Chehalis, Wash., had big plans for entering his cow Celebrity in a costume contest. He worked on making a flying saucer, which he planned to place on the cow’s back. He hoped to make it look like Celebrity was being abducted by aliens.



Fair princess MaKenna Williams visited with a friend at the Pacific County Fair in Menlo, Wash.

9-1-WHAT?

THE BEST OF THE WORST CALLS TO ASTORIA 911 DISPATCH

We feel you

The end of summer always brings a certain sort of strangeness. You want to swing your arms at sea lions, perhaps steal a cat, stiff the cab driver on your way into the strip club, fight over cigarettes, or just go outside and yell about random things ...

Follow reporter Kyle Spurr on his 9-1-What? Twitter watch, where a few of the sometimes head-scratching calls to area dispatch take center stage. The full feed is at www.twitter.com/9_1_WHAT.

9-1-WHAT? @9_1_WHAT

{9/3 @ 12:17 a.m.} Cab driver reported a man did not pay cab fare and went into Annie's Saloon. #Astoria

1

9-1-WHAT? @9_1_WHAT

{9/4 @ 4:10 p.m.} Two people involved in a physical altercation over cigarettes. #Astoria

1

9-1-WHAT? @9_1_WHAT

{8/30 @ 7:24 p.m.} Four people swinging their arms at the sea lions. #Astoria

1

9-1-WHAT? @9_1_WHAT

{9/2 @ 11:31 a.m.} Caller reported her cat stolen out of her hotel room last night. #Astoria

1

9-1-WHAT? @9_1_WHAT

{9/4 @ 2:24 p.m.} Caller reported elderly neighbor outside yelling about random things. #Astoria

1

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