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“We were just pretty impressed by them,” he said, adding that since booking Midland, the band’s success and popularity has continued on an upward trajectory. “They’ve just been going like mad.”

Drawing in out-of-towners

The board and fairgrounds staff started staging concerts in conjunction with the fair three years ago, making Midland their fourth.

Adding the concert feature has successfully increased the fair’s draw — especially in terms of out-of-state visitors — and augmented the demographics of people who attend the event, Autio said.

This year, they expect about 600 to 700 people to come from out of town specifically for the concert, which provides value to the community in terms of tourism and hospitality dollars.

“Before we even printed tickets, we had them available online,” Autio said. They quickly started getting ticket orders from people across the country and Canada “who wanted to come here to see Midland.”

The fair board and staff work with a booking agency to secure entertainment for the concerts. The agency provides them with a menu of artists and their price ranges, he said. “If we’re interested in one of them, they’ll see if it fits into their travel dates.”

Routing is one of the most important issues, according to Clatsop County Fair and Expo Operations Manager John Lewis.

“A band isn’t going to want to come out for a single fair,” he said.

Through a collaboration between the booking agency, various fairs, other entertainment buyers and the performers’ agents, venues

such as the Clatsop County Fair can secure a group who is able to schedule other nearby performances that make their travel and time worthwhile. For example, Midland is playing at the Klamath County Fairgrounds the night before their concert in Astoria.

Since the Clatsop County Fair secured Midland months ago, the group has continued to become more popular.

Autio is unsure whether they could have booked the group if they tried today, as Midland’s near future includes an international tour promoting “Let it Roll” and headlining for other well-known country artists.

Although the fair’s concerts over the past three years — featuring Craig Morgan, Montgomery Gentry and Diamond Rio — were successful and well-received, “this year is a little differ-

ent, because this group [Midland] is on the rise” in terms of their career and reputation within the country music industry, Autio said. They are “by far the most popular” group the fair has hosted.

A treasured tradition

Although the addition of nationally known entertainment has increasingly become a promotional boon for the fair, other aspects of the event continue to be


meaningful for the community as well, Autio said.

“It’s a great tradition and family activity,” he said, adding many people cherish memories of going to their county fair as both children and adults.

The fair also has a front stage that features local artists, including dance groups, magicians and bands, along with an array of carnival games and rides, food vendors, hog wrestling, mon-

ster truck rides and a demolition derby.

The fair also has an important connection with the local 4-H clubs, serving as the prime opportunity for 4-Hers to show and auction off their animals, Lewis said.

They start planning each fair at the start of the year, and from January onward, he added, “we’re excited to see the whole thing come together.” 



Midland, a country band hailing from Texas that is on the rise, headlines at the Clatsop County Fair at 7 p.m. Friday. The group, which includes members Mark Wystrach, Cameron Duddy, and Jess Carson, received two nominations at the 2018 Grammy Awards.