

Celebrating 150 years!

Union County Fair is Aug. 3-6

By **Trish Yerges**
Go! Magazine

LA GRANDE — This year, the Union County Fair Association marks its 150th anniversary with the theme “American Flair at the County Fair.” The fair board wishes to invite the public to a celebration party and lots of fun-packed events during the Aug. 3-6 fair week.

Tickets are sold daily at the fairgrounds entrance gate: \$6 for adults; \$4 for kids 7-17; kids age 6 and younger are free; \$5 for veterans with military identification; seniors age 60 and older are free. Week-pass bracelets will be sold Wednesday only: \$18 for adults and \$12 for kids 7-17.

Fair board member Deb Cornford has a great line-up of events starting with a

party at the fairgrounds to kick things off.

“We do plan to have a 150th celebration party,” she said, “inviting people for cake and giveaways on Wednesday at about 5:30 p.m. at the big stage.”

A HISTORY OF PERSEVERANCE

The 150-year-long history of the Union County Fair traces back to Sept. 22, 1872, at a meeting in Cove, where the Union County Agricultural Association was formed to promote an annual fair.

The first fair was held on C Avenue in Old Town La Grande, now the top of Fourth Street. In 1873, the first fairground was procured, being located about 3½ miles southeast of Island City near Gekeler Lane. From 1891 to 1909, the fairgrounds had moved temporarily onto Island City Highway closer to La Grande.

After that time, the county fair became



Kaladin Rasmussen pets a baby goat named Cindy Lou at the 2021 Union County Fair. See animals, find food and listen to music at this year's fair, Aug. 3-6.

The Observer, File

street fairs in La Grande, and then in 1912, it made its fairgrounds just north of today's Dutch Brothers Coffee drive-thru. That too didn't last long, so during 1922-26, it was held in Elgin and Cove. It was even held in Pioneer Park, but that wasn't a large enough venue to support its growing popularity.

A big break came in 1947, when the Mavericks Riding Club offered 10 acres of its land to the Union County Fair Association, and in 1948, the fair made its permanent home there.

WHAT'S NEW AT THE FAIR

Cornford said the fair lineup of fun this year will include some new events.

“We've brought in quite a bit of entertainment to fill the small stage this year, which hasn't happened in several years. We're bringing back the Elkhorn Media Group Talent Show, which we haven't done in a few years,” she said. “Also, Carla and her young group of fiddlers are new,

as is the Cory Peterson band.”

Lego Time is also a new feature of the fair. Kids can compete to make their Lego creations, which will be judged on Friday to award a Champion Lego Builder.

The large stage will offer entertainment every night. Some familiar acts include Countryfied on Wednesday and Tiller's Folly on Thursday. Boise's Ripple Effect plays Friday, and Saturday features Brewers Grade and an outdoor teen dance, 8:30-10 p.m.

In addition, the fair will be offering horseback rides for the kids and face painting. The Mavericks will put on a mutton-busting event between 7-8 p.m. following the parade down Adams Avenue starting at 5:30 p.m. on Friday. The Grand Marshal this year is Jessie Barreto Baker of Cove, a dedicated 4-H leader.

For more details, go to www.unioncountyfair.org. For more history, visit goeasternoregon.com.




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