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JOLENE GUZMAN/Itemizer-Observer file  
One of several changes to the entertainment schedule at the 2015 Polk County Fair will be moving the youth livestock auction to earlier in the afternoon on Saturday.

## Entertainment changes in store for county fair

By **Jolene Guzman**  
The Itemizer-Observer

POLK COUNTY — After long absence, a rodeo is back in the lineup for the 2015 Polk County Fair.

Wild West Events, based out of Creswell, will be bringing in a group of professional cowboys and cowgirls to compete in bareback and saddle bronc riding, barrel racing, bull riding and mutton busting. The last time the fair had a full rodeo was in the late 1990s. After that, the fair hosted a youth rodeo for about 10 years.

"But even that got to the point where it was really expensive to put on," said Tina Andersen, fair manager.

Andersen said Wild West Events is sponsoring some of the cost of the show to help the fair afford to put it on this year. The rodeo will be opening night of the fair and is free with fair admission.

That is just one of quite a few changes to the entertainment lineup in store for the 2015 version of the fair.

The most noticeable

change will be the absence of a traditional carnival. In recent years, the fair has worked to improve attendance at the carnival with disappointing results. This year, Andersen wasn't able to bring in a carnival.

"We are small, and Tina really, really, really tried to get a carnival, but carnivals don't like us because we are so small," said Anna Scharf, fair board chairwoman.

Andersen said Hood River County holds its fair at a similar-sized venue, but attendance rates are much higher, so revenue is better for the carnival company. She said at Polk County, a carnival may make \$18,000 to \$20,000, but in Hood River, it could make several times that amount.

In its place will be a collection of games, slides, obstacle courses and fun demonstrations put on by local organizations.

"Tina's worked really hard to find a solution and everybody needs to come out and see her awesome solution," Scharf said.

MADJEK Industries out of Salem will bring "zorb balls" (think giant hamster balls in a pool of water), a Finding Nemo bouncy castle, a trampoline, shark slide and rat race obstacle course.

Those activities in the "kids' area" of the fair require tickets — one to three — at a cost \$1 each or 25 for \$20.

Also, the Polk County Sheriff's Office will be demonstrating equipment and Southwest Polk Rural Fire Protection District's Rickreall station will host a firefighting-themed obstacle course for the youngsters.

Another new attraction is American Thunder's monster truck. Andersen said the truck will be on display in the arena on Saturday starting at 5 p.m. and will offer free rides.

In one final change, the popular youth livestock auction has been moved to 3 p.m. on Saturday, allowing fairgoers to take in both the auction and the headliner show, Carrie Cunningham, in the evening.

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