

Chase County Fair & Expo continues to thrive

Written by Wauneta Breeze

Wednesday, 21 August 2013 17:49 -



The Lions Club bingo booth was a popular attraction at the 2013 Chase County Fair. Here, from left, Donna and Bob Whiting and Lela Hamilton concentrate on their cards as numbers are called. (Sheri Hink-Wagner | The Wauneta Breeze)

By Russ Pankonin

The Imperial Republican

At the end of every Chase County Fair & Expo, people wonder how the fair board will be able to top themselves the next year. Amazingly, the fair board has been able to do just that and this year was no exception.

Looking back on another full week of fair events, fair board members couldn't be happier with the success of this year's fair.

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There's one thing the fair board can't control—the weather. This week's fair was disrupted slightly Tuesday night with about a quarter-inch of rain. Other than that, conditions were perfect.

Similar to the 2012 fair, temperatures this year never exceeded 85°F, making for perfect conditions.

Fair board president Dave Schilke said the cool weather played a big role in the success of this year's fair.

The conditions helped boost crowds on Friday and Saturday. "We had great crowds on the grounds those days," he said.

Overall, Schilke said it was another successful fair. "I've had a lot of positive comments. People said it was a great fair."

Crowd numbers strong

Crowd numbers at the Christian family show, demo derby and both grandstand shows came in really strong, according to Alex McNair, the fair board's entertainment chair.

Wednesday night's Christian family show featured Laura Story, an accomplished artist in Christian music circles.

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McNair said Story drew around 950 people to the show, making it one of the largest Christian shows in a number of years.

McNair said the fair worked with the Ministerial Association of Southwest Nebraska to take the Christian show to a new level. That goal was accomplished with Story's appearance, he noted.

He said the two entities share a common goal of growing the Christian family show every year going forward.

Pastor Phil Harris of the Wesleyan Church challenged those in attendance to make it the most attended show at the fair.

McNair said it drew a lot of people to the fair that night. He said he's received nothing but good comments about Story's message through her music.

The demo derby turned in another great show as well, with more than 1,200 in attendance.

A total of 27 entries participated in the event, making it one of the larger derbies in the area.

McNair said the Styx concert Friday and The Talbott Brothers and Justin Moore shows Saturday night drew great crowds as well.

Going into the weekend, it was the Styx show that had sold the most tickets. However, before Saturday night was done, The Talbott Brothers and Justin Moore sold the most tickets.

McNair said 2,250 tickets were sold for Styx, representing 60.2 percent of capacity. Saturday night sales totalled 2,378 tickets, representing 63.6 percent of capacity.

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McNair said good weather helped walk-up sales both nights.

On Friday night, more than \$8,000 in tickets were sold at the ticket office. On Saturday night, that number exceeded \$14,000.

Volunteers play a key role

Schilke said volunteers represent one of the main reasons the Chase County Fair continues to be successful.

He said each and every volunteer, from 4-H leaders to those in the Eagles booth, all play an important role in the fair's success.

He also recognized the fair's benefactor sponsors, as well.

This year, a total of 79 businesses and individuals joined as sponsors in the fair's benefactor program.

Money raised from the program helps support improvements to the fair grounds.

"We couldn't do it without the volunteers and sponsors," Schilke said.

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New building planned

Planning continues on a new building for the grounds. The building will be located in a space just northwest of the arena. That space has been used as expo space the last two years.

The building will replace the curved quonset Expo Hall on the east edge of the expo area.

There will a large open general purpose area with kitchen facilities and bathrooms.

Funds from the benefactor program will help defray the cost of the new facility.

2014 Fair Aug. 10-17

The dates for next year's Chase County Fair have already been set.

It will open on Sunday, Aug. 10, and run through Sunday, Aug. 17.

Fair board members will be meeting soon to review the 2013 fair and begin making plans for next year's fair.