

SUMMER ATTRACTION

The Cuyahoga County Fair has changed

But its main mission remains the same

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The Cuyahoga County Fair has brought Clevelanders together since 1893.

The 123rd fair will take place Tuesday to Sunday, Aug. 11, at the fairgrounds in Berea.

A lot of things have changed in those years. The county has grown from a booming post-Civil War industrial city surrounded by farmlands to a sprawling county with an urban core flanked by suburbs. Farms are rare, and many of us have lost our connection with the land.

The fair has changed, too. There are more rides and carny foods and cover bands and yes, a demolition derby, to appeal to the city dwellers who make up most of our county.

But look beyond the cheese-on-a-stick, Ferris wheel and those crashing cars, and you'll see things have changed less than you'd expect in a century. The prized vegetables, draft horses, cows and sheep and show chickens and cooking projects and quilts are still there. Many of them are part of the 4-H portion of the fair.

Robin Stone, extension educator for 4-H Youth Development, says these portions of the fair are more necessary than ever.

"It's important for everyone to know where their food is coming from. We're not in a county so closely associated with rural areas and farming, so this part of the fair is an important part of learning."

This year's fair will feature more than 140 4-H animal projects, and more than 200 non-animal projects.

In total, this year the fair will feature 2,000 animals, consisting of cattle, draft ponies, draft horses, standard horses, goats, sheep, swine, chickens, ducks, geese, rabbits, guinea pigs, covies, dogs and of course racing pigs and a litter of three-week old piglets.

For many fairgoers, this might be the first time they have seen some of these animals.

"Because of where we live, a lot of people don't understand what a sheep is or what a chicken is like. For some kids, the fair will be their first interaction with an animal other than a dog or cat," says Stone.

"It's important that the fair keeps the tradition alive. Otherwise, it's just a festival."



Claire Carney, 6, of Mantua, is too tiny to reach the water fountain during the 122nd annual Cuyahoga County Fair in Berea last August. Photos by Lisa DeJong, The Plain Dealer



Tiffany Turner, 23, of Spencer, Ohio, braids the mane of "Boo" in the barn during last year's fair.

FUN FACTS

- › More than 210,000 fair lovers attended the 2018 Cuyahoga County Fair.
- › Three thousand workers help to put together the fair: Directors, grounds crew, 4-H members, volunteers, concession workers, ride and midway operators.
- › The Cuyahoga County Fair's Demolition Derby is one of the largest in the state.
- › There will be fireworks at dusk Wednesday, Thursday and Friday this year.

ENTERTAINMENT

- › Grandstand entertainment ranges from truck racing to horse racing, live bands to demolition derbies. A full schedule can be found at cuyfair.com.
- › New acts this year include Zach Johnson's racing pigs, Jason D'Vaude Variety Show & Art of Fire Show, Bubble Wonders with Geoff Akins-Hannah and hypnotist David Anthony.

HIGHLIGHTS INCLUDE:

Friday, Aug. 9, 8 p.m.: Frank Amato's Cleveland All-Stars tribute show. \$20-\$25, available at the website.

Saturday, Aug. 10, 8 p.m.: Ashley McBryde, "The Girl Going Nowhere" Tour. Tickets, \$37.50-\$42.50, available at the website.

The grand fair finale is the Demolition Derby finals at 7 p.m. Sunday, Aug. 11. Admission is \$10. Drivers still needed; go to the website to sign up.

ADMISSION INFO AND TICKET DEALS

When: Tuesday through Sunday, Aug. 11; noon-11 p.m. Tuesday-Friday; 10 a.m.-11 p.m. Saturday; and noon-10 p.m. Sunday.

Where: Cuyahoga County Fairgrounds, Berea. General admission: \$7, Monday-Thursday; \$8, Friday, Saturday and Sunday. Seniors and children under 12 are \$6. Active military with valid ID and children under 3 get in for free. Admission does not include ride tickets: \$1.25 for one ticket/\$22 for a day pass. Many discounts available; see below.

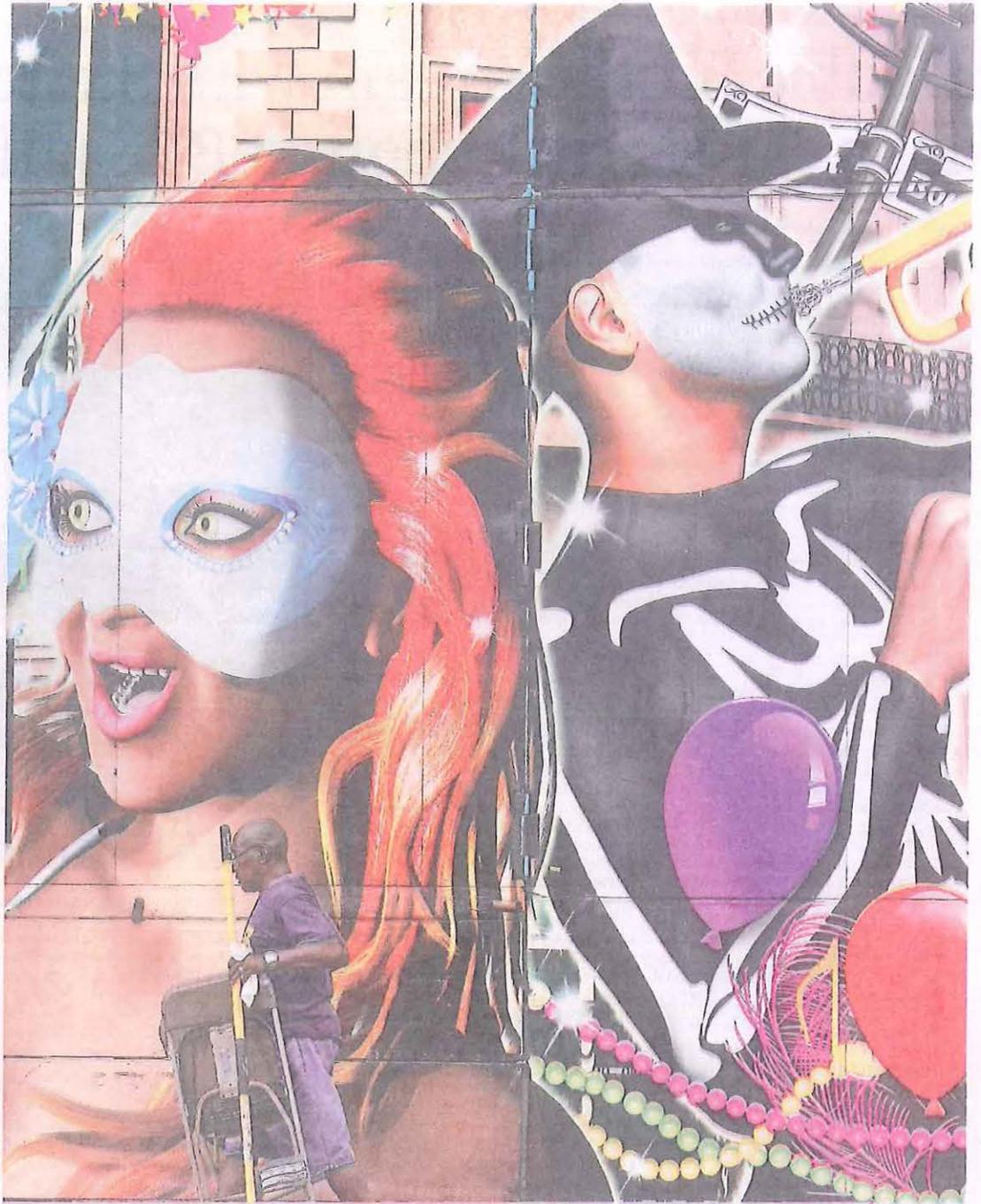
DAILY DEALS

Opening Day, Tuesday: Buy one fair gate admission, get one free; all day, all ages. Fair opens at noon and rides open at 3 p.m. with discounted all-day ride stamps (\$10).

Wednesday and Thursday: Arrive by 3 p.m. for just \$1 per person and discounted ride stamps.

Friday: Noon to 5 p.m., seniors (60 and over) and veterans get \$2 admission.

Saturday: 10 a.m.-noon, \$2 per person admission.



Jeff Chapple prepares his carnival exhibit "Mardi Gras," a mirrored fun house, during the 122nd annual Cuyahoga County Fair in Berea last year.