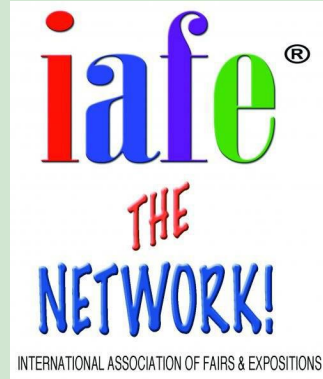




MAAF NEWSLETTER

MARCH 2024

Issue #2



EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR'S MESSAGE

First let me start off by thanking the conference committee along with the other members of our board for putting together a great conference and banquet. It's been many years since we've had over 500 people for the banquet, and a shout out to the hotel staff for doing such a great job. A special thank you to Liz Chaisson, from Pittston Fair, for taking on the Ag Queens and Princess meet and greet at the conference. Again, thanks. Congratulations to Dick Hall (Farmington Fair) on being 2023's Catherine Damren Award Winner and to Jessia Benner (Pittston Fair) 2023's Rising Star. Please go to our [photo link](#) to see all our conference photos.

Update, the Pittston fair dates are June 20 th - 23 rd this year and the Union fair will be on July 7-10.

Legislative Update: LD 2124 An Act to Clarify the Eligibility of an Off-Track Betting Facility, came out of committee unanimous OTP. This bill will allow the OTB's to relocate and allow for additional OTB's to be licensed, which will help the stipend account for our fairs.

LD 2108 An Act to Amend Maine's Charitable Organization Gambling Laws. Out of committee unanimous OTP. What this does is allows more than one registrant to operate games of chance and provides that an agricultural society must determine the number of registrants permitted to operate during the fair. LD 1992 An Act to Legalize Historical Horse Racing and Electronic Beano. I attended a work session on the bill on Feb. 29th, at which time it was rescheduled until the week of March 4 th . More information to come in the next newsletter.

The Zone 1 meeting will be held May 16-18 in Springfield, MA this year. Hope some of you can attend. Please remember, if your fair is a member of the IAFE you can [apply for a grant](#) to help with the costs. Hope to see you there.

Until next time be Fair Friendly and have a great Spring.





DICK HALL WINS 2023 CATHERINE DAMREN AWARD



The Catherine L. Damren Distinguished Service Award is presented to a person in the Maine agricultural community who has gone above and beyond in support in support and promotion of Maine's agricultural fairs. This year's recipient is C. Richard "Dick" Hall of Farmington Fair.

Dick, as many of us know him, started officially in the fair business in 1973. He took over from his grandfather, Ralph Hall, as a trustee in Farmington, and served until his retirement in 2004. During that time and beyond, Dick has been involved with the MAAF, serving on the board of directors and serving as the President from 1998-2000. He was the MAAF representative to the Maine State Pulling Commission from 1990 til his retirement in 2015.

During his many years with the fairs, Dick has served as the pulling superintendent at Farmington from 1973-2004, Fryeburg Fair for 25 years and Blue Hill for many years. Dick could be found at all of our Maine fairs as a very enthusiastic

fairgoer, moving from person to person inquiring as to their wellbeing, sharing the latest about his extensive Hall family and always with a warm and welcoming smile.

Dick joins previous recipients of this award - Roy Andrews and Tom Foster. Congratulations, Dick!

JESSICA BENNER WINS

2023 RISING STAR AWARD

The Maine Association of Agricultural Fairs presented the 2023 Rising Star Award to Jessica Benner from Pittston Fair. Brittany Moon, the 2022 Rising Star, introduced Jessica as follows:

"Jessica grew up on the Pittston fairgrounds and could always be found days before the fair opened each year helping to take care of the last minute details. During the fair, she could be found at the barn with her cows, but would also be available to help at the truck pulls and other mechanical events.

As a previous contestant for the Strawberry Queen, Jessica performed hours of community service. After being crowned Queen in 2004, she finished her term and then continued to assist Liz Chaisson with the pageant in the years to follow.



Jessica works side by side with her husband in coordinating the fair mechanical events and can always be available to answer questions when needed. When the Pittston Fair treasurer began to consider stepping down, Jessica put her degree in accounting to good use and began assisting the outgoing treasurer. In 2023, Jessica was chosen by the fair board to take over the position of Fair Treasurer. Elected to the board of directors in 2020, Jessica has brought a new youthful outlook on the fair events and activities.

Finally, if you can't find Jessica with the strawberry princesses, cows or the derby cars, head over to the Cook Shack. She has helped there for a long time, always with a warm, welcoming smile. We are proud to introduce you to the newest Rising Star - from Pittston Fair - the fair known as "Maine's Friendliest Fair."

2023 - AG CHALLENGE MAINE ON MY PLATE LARGE FAIR - CUMBERLAND FAIR

Thank you to all who participated in our recent 2023 Ag Education Challenge. Maine On My Plate offered many opportunities to introduce our fair goers to the connections between the food we grow and the tasty meals that we produce using these foods.

Our contest judges, representing the Kennebec Valley Community College Culinary Arts program, Allagash Brewing Company and the Maine Dairy Promotion Board and the Maine Dairy and Nutrition Council, were honored to be asked to review and score the applications.

Cumberland Fair received the award for "agricultural experience for ALL fairgoers at a fair operating for five concurrent days or more". There were three major areas of their fair that focused on Maine On My Plate. The Maple Sugar House, the Farm Museum and the most extensive area of display could be found in the Exhibition Hall. Visitors to the Exhibition Hall were greeted with a large banner boldly displaying MAINE ON MY PLATE. Throughout the hall, visitors could find Maine cookbooks, State of Maine license plates, cooking demonstrations, student scavenger hunts, photographs of Maine foods and much much more. Many local businesses sponsored the hall activities, and two home school groups did cooking demonstrations in our kitchen using local products and recipes that highlighted

Maine foods. Local orchards created colorful displays of fresh Maine produce. The biggest challenge for this team was to measure how much education was occurring. “We know that our work was enjoyed by the fair visitors, as they stopped by frequently to offer positive comments and share their search for more *Maine On My Plate* logo signs “. The Cumberland Fair team of Carolyn Small and Lynn Copp spearheaded the program, and their whole staff used the theme as an exciting way to breathe new life into their hall. Everyone involved enjoyed being a part of the planning and preparations.



AG CHALLENGE MAINE ON MY PLATE CHILDREN'S PROGRAM LITCHFIELD FAIR

Scoring highest for children’s programs was Litchfield Fair. Agricultural experiences designed for children and offered by a fair operating four concurrent days or less, Litchfield Fair looked at how they could encourage fairgoers to recognize the connection between agriculture and the foods produced in Maine.

Having spent time at an IAFE annual convention and observing many new ways to educate their fairgoers, the team at Litchfield set to work offering hands on opportunities for children, and their families, to teach themselves about Maine agriculture. Representatives from Wheeler’s Wee Farm, the 4-H building, the exhibition hall and the Pumpkin Contest worked tirelessly to offer their fairgoers a combination of diverse, colorful and fun activities.

Wheeler’s Wee Farm greets the fair folks as they pass through the ticket gate.. This program, made possible through the financial generosity of longtime dairy farmer Alice Wheeler, introduces children of all ages to a diverse sampling of Maine agriculture. Entering through an apple orchard, the path leads to a hen house, lobster boat, garden plot, milk cow

and much more. Everyone finishes at the General Store, where their produce is exchanged for a healthy snack. Many of these snacks are donated by local companies/businesses.

Nearby, a model of the USDA's My Plate guide to healthy eating. Divided into 5 sections of foods, children are encouraged to create a healthy meal plate.

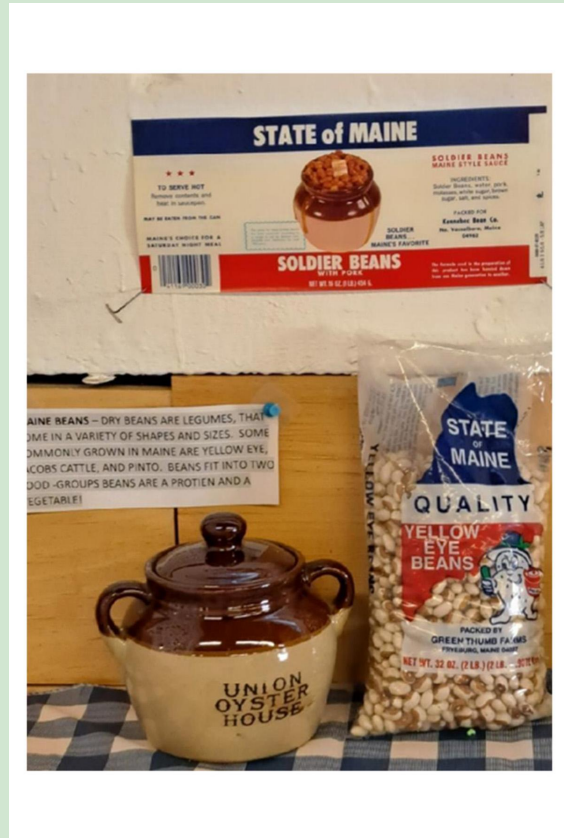
Adults noticed brightly colored, decorated mailboxes as they walk around the fairgrounds. Tucked inside were recipes from local fair families sharing information about how to connect the recipe and local agricultural products.

The Exhibition Hall was full of examples of many Maine foods - potatoes, beans, lobster, apples, blueberries, grains and much more.

The Giant Pumpkin contest educated folks on growing pumpkins and cooking with pumpkins. Seeds were distributed to families who were then encouraged to grow pumpkins for the 2024 fair competition.

Finally, the 4-H building explained the use and importance of many antique tools used in food preparation.

How delighted the planning team was to find positive notes tucked inside the mailboxes regarding their displays. Overall, "the planning, preparation and completion of this project has provided many new ideas for the upcoming year."





NEWS FROM THE MAAF FOUNDATION



The Officers and Board of Directors of the MAAF Foundation thank all of the Auction attendees at the January Conference for your generosity in bidding on the Auction items. \$4,300 was made at the Auction. Thank you to all who donated items, Dick Brown and Crew, Darcy Winslow and her Auction Crew and all who bid on items. The 50/50 was also very successful at the Conference, and we appreciate all who bought tickets.

The Foundation Logo was unveiled at the Conference. Thanks to Benchmark Graphics for their assistance with this project. Our new Scholarship Form is available on the MAAF Website and also on the FAME Website. The Deadline for the 2024 Scholarship applications is April

20th.

We are presently working with a Web designer on a Foundation website – watch for news on this in the future. New programs were discussed at our Annual Board Meeting and information will be coming out on these in the future.

IMPORTANT FAIR DATES!

March 19th - Ag Day at the Legislature
 May 16-18 - Zone 1 meeting, Springfield, MA - Eastern States Exposition
 June 13-16 Springfield Fair
 June 20-23 Pittston Fair
 June 26-29 Monmouth Fair
 January 24-26 - 2025 MAAF Annual Meeting

UPCOMING FOR THE FAIR SEASON

MAAF is looking to continue showcasing, during the 2025 MAAF conference, the many events that are “fan favorites” at our 2024 Maine agricultural fairs.

Please take and send in 2-3 current photos from the following events:

DEMO DERBY - contact info which includes name, email/phone and fair name. Also how many derbies and which events your fair hosts - powder wheels, ladies, etc

WOODSMEN'S DAY - contact info which includes name, email/phone and fair name. Also which events that your fair hosts - kids competition, ladies, mens. Senior categories,etc.

MUD RUN AND/OR ROCK CRAWL - contact info which includes name. email/phone and fair name.

SHOW OFF YOUR 2025 FAIR POSTER

The walls of the MAAF Conference Hospitality room showcase the wide variety of Maine fair posters from past years. Set aside one poster from this season to pass on to the conference committee, and we will make sure to put it up for the January 2025 conference.

2024 MAAF AGRICULTURAL AWARD CONTEST CREATING AN EXPERIENCE: MEET OUR FARMERS

For 2024, Meet Our Farmers will introduce your fairgoers to the next step in our ag education challenge. We have brought the agriculture of Maine in Maine GROWS - sharing both familiar and unfamiliar produce across our state. In year 2023, through Maine On My Plate, we expanded what is grown to where to find it, how to use it and how many options are available, year round, for more ag information - cookbooks, 4-H, Internet, UMO. “Meet Our Farmer” brings the “stars” of the Maine ag scene. Who grows our food, who markets it and who knows the most about Maine agriculture? Our Maine farmers. Seasonally, our maple farmers are front and center in the spring, while the pumpkins are harvested and displayed at our fall farm stands. Invite your local farmers to visit your fairgrounds and share their history, their successes and struggles - consider designing a Meet Our Farmers logo for your fair to direct fairgoers to all the farmers who will answer questions and share information.

Use the MDACF donated video monitors from the past to show commodity videos of Maine farmers - potatoes, blueberries, Gulf of Maine fisheries,etc. (I can direct you to where to get these!)

Collaborate with local schools to create a “Foxfire” type project and interview farmers.

Have fun with this year’s ag challenge!

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