



Press Release 06/01/2020

Belvidere, IL - Since the identification of the Coronavirus Pandemic, the Boone County Fair Association, staff, and community leaders have been reviewing all aspects of the upcoming fair, with the anticipation of providing a 2020 Boone County Fair. The Boone County Fair has been a quality family event with fun and educational activities since 1957.

However, on Saturday, May 30th, the board voted to authorize President Lyle Lee to follow the recommendation of the Boone County Health Department and other community leaders and cancel the 2020 fair. With this press release President Lyle Lee announces that for the concern and safety of our fairgoers, staff, vendors, entertainers, exhibitors, sponsors, suppliers, volunteers, and the broader community, the 2020 Boone County Fair is cancelled.

The Boone County Fair Board has been closely monitoring the COVID-19 pandemic data along with local, state, and federal health officials. Although some restrictions have been recently lifted and some businesses have begun re-opening, the openings still include strict safety measures. Some examples are social distancing, temperature checking, and wearing of masks while entering the business. There is significant evidence that this disease spreads very quickly when people are in densely populated areas. This has led numerous agencies to continue recommending that mass gatherings be strictly avoided.

The Boone County Fair is one of the largest county fairs in the State of Illinois, with last year's attendance exceeding 222,000 people in the 6 days of the event. The revenue generated is critical to many local community businesses and organizations that participate in the fair and this factor weighed heavily into the consideration to cancel the fair. However, more and more livestock exhibitors, entertainers and attraction operators are concerned about going on the road this summer. Some commercial exhibitors are past their deadlines for getting products, and now there is even a question of there being adequate supplies for food vendors. Many are having trouble finding people who are willing to work in crowds. We have received feedback from local pastors asking us to cancel for fear of their volunteer parishioners contracting the disease while working at our event. Then there is a very loyal 78-year-old fairgoer that told us she could not come and exhibit at the fair like she has for the last 60 years because she was scared to contract the virus. These stories are heart felt and our top priority has and always will be to protect the safety of our fairgoers, staff, and partners while putting on the best county fair in the state.

Another consideration included the magnitude of possible financial repercussions associated with hosting a fair with a significantly reduced attendance. Also, the difficulty and cost of implementing the required mass gathering safety measures could be detrimental to the viability of future annual fairs. As a 501c3 organization the Boone County Fair Association is bound to be a responsible steward of its public funds. Donors have entrusted us with their funds and wishes for the fair not only heading into 2021, but for years to come.



Coming to this decision has been an extremely emotional undertaking. Countless people have labored over this decision for months on exactly what path to take. We have consulted with other members of our industry nationwide and statewide looking for guidance as to the best way to handle this unprecedented situation. We have turned to the Illinois Department of Agriculture to provide advice and out of the box ideas to make the fair happen, but all directions point back to public safety. As stated, our top priority is public safety, and this must not be compromised.

The Boone County Fair Association fully understands the disappointment this decision causes. We have deeply passionate and loyal officers, volunteers, staff, vendors, partners, fairgoers, and exhibitors. There are no words that can describe how grateful we are for them which makes us even more focused to remain strong and resilient for future generations to enjoy the experiences that we have.

As our governor's Restore Illinois plan moves forward, be assured that the Boone County Fair Association will continue to closely monitor all data presented in hopes that Phase 5 comes quickly. We will be working together with our local health department and community leaders to prioritize and provide decisions on other events that are and will be scheduled to be held at our fairgrounds.

Thank you all for understanding, and we look forward to your visit to the 2021 Boone County Fair which is scheduled to take place August 10th – 15th, 2021.

For further information please visit our website www.boonecountyfair.com.