Osceola County Fair Fun

The Osceola County Fair is at Osceola Heritage Park on highway 192 between Kissimmee and St. Cloud through Feb. 20. Colorful carnival rides, cotton candy and farm animals are some of the components of a county fair that make them fun for the young and young at heart. It is a hometown festival where families can spend some time playing together. It is a chance for businesses to show off new products or local services.

This is the twenty-sixth Osceola County Fair I have attended. The fair continues to offer our youth a great opportunity to have fun while they share what they have learned with others. The facilities are newer, the exhibits have expanded, there are more activities and more families involved, but the same life lessons are being learned by participants.

Youth involved in the market steer, hog and lamb projects learn record keeping skills as they complete project books for judging. From purchase of the young animal to feed costs and vet visits, expenses are recorded helping them learn about the business side of a livestock operation. The income side of the business comes when they sell their animal at a fast paced auction during the fair. Come out and support our youth by attending the shows and sales.

Market sales at the fair are not a cheap place to buy meat for your freezer. Commercial grocery stores offer better prices. Instead, the purchase is an investment in our youth. Sale prices are usually well above the price the animals would bring at a commercial livestock market auction. However, the higher price rewards the youth and recognizes them for being responsible, learning a skill and doing something productive with their time.

Participants hope the revenue from the sale of the animal pays for their project expenses so the balance can go toward summer camp fees, a college fund or savings toward their first car or truck. It is a way for them to learn the value of a dollar.

At the show, animals get judged on their conformation or how close they come to standards for the breed including health, muscle mass, potential meat quality and general appearance.

The youth are the ones getting judged in the showmanship competition portion of a show. The judge awards ribbons based on their ability to show off or present their project. The judge looks for eye contact, professionalism, and appearance of the youth showing their project animal.

While the market shows revolve around the sale of the animal, all animals at the fair are not sold. Many youth show their animals as purebred breeding stock or as pets. Pocket pet projects, such as turtles, aquariums, snakes, hamsters and parakeets are great projects as starters for younger kids.

Animal care, no matter how small the critter, helps youth learn responsibility as they feed, water, groom and clean up after their animals. 4-Hers as young as 5 years old, called Cloverbuds, tell the judges about their pet. You will hear the cutest stories at this show.

This year, Osceola County hosts the State 4-H Dairy Cattle Show. We will have more milk cows on property than ever before. Youth from all over Florida “moooved” in Thursday and the show closes at 1:00 today with an awards banquet. Female dairy animals have to give birth to give milk so sometimes the youth will increase their herd and keep the baby calves. If they don’t have much space at home, they may sell the babies to other 4-H or FFA members or to others interested in fresh milk at home.

In addition to the animal shows, 4-H clubs will have scarecrows on display. Baked goods, arts and crafts, plants, wood working, photography, posters and educational exhibits are all part of the youth exhibits at the fair. We also have a citrus tree show and auction where members have been caring for a citrus tree for almost a year. Buyers are needed for these quality citrus trees suitable for home yards. Anyone can enter the rooster crowing contest where participants try all kinds of silly tricks to get the roosters to crow. There are many fancy purebred rabbits,
chickens and other farm animals on display.

4-H Club members invite you to buy cookies, boiled peanuts, sweet tea, strawberry shortcake and other snacks from their concession areas to support year ‘round youth activities.

Bring the family, a friend or neighbor and come see some good kids doing good things. More information on hours of operation and daily specials is available by calling the fair office at 321-697-3050. If you are interested in learning more about how to support youth participants or how to purchase an animal or citrus tree, call the fair office to get information in advance of the show.

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