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Keeping food on the table

By Claudia Villemaire

Most folks would say everything is changed. Retail stores, boutiques and events of all kinds are closed or cancelled. They'll tell you how important essential care and medicine is and how much they appreciate our frontline workers. One can find them while peeling an orange or crunching into an apple. And probably they are on their way to join the lines of folks at a grocery store, ready to stock up on essentials.

The key word here is 'essentials'. The tendency to forget the producers, perhaps just outside of town, who have relentlessly continued to produce the food those people are about to purchase is not surprising. Leaning over fresh fruit and vegetables, complaining about the price of meat, looking for cheaper cuts, picking out hot dogs, sausage and baloney or other similar products, it's doubtful thoughts of producers who feed and grow most of the ingredients for these items are included in their choices.

But milk, meat, vegetables and cereal crops such as corn and soya must be grown by the producer who is just as essential as the cosmetics industry turned into production of hand sanitizers. In the Eastern Townships where a variety of 'essentials' are produced, the struggle this spring has been financing the high cost of preparing the fields and financing the cost of seeding and fertilizing probably thousands of acres in this widespread area.

Perhaps consumers are not aware these producers have been strapped for cash also. Feeds designed for different productions such as pork and beef, poultry and lambs, seed fertilizer, lime for the fields and fuel for farm machinery, all for crops that don't bring revenue immediately, have been major factors in spring planning.

Agriculture producers are out in their fields as usual. Back in the barns, milk cows, calves and young cattle still get their allotment of grains and fodder. There's milk to produce and even though the demand is lower due to schools, day cares, restaurants, ice cream makers and dairy bars still closed, Market demand has made an impact on milk production

across the board. Milk producers have taken several hits to their income. The first, a decrease in the about of milk needed and recently a decrease in the price of milk to the producer. Quotas used to have a slim margin of plus or minus considering over or under producing meant penalties. But now, according to Tim Keenan who with Maria and his family operate a dairy farm just outside town, explained, "Now, there's no margin and over-producing means either you pay or you dump the excess. Actually, if production goes too high, the dairy commission selects random producers and requires a full bulk tank to go down the drain."

These adjustments mean less income in an operation where feed and grains demand still remains basically the same unless the producer decides to sell one or more producing animals.

One would expect to hear a producer express discouragement and perhaps complain, considering the Keenan family with two sons at Macdonald College and two children at home. "But that's the way it is, and we have learned to live a bit differently. Food production must keep up and we all have had to adjust. A perfect example here has been having the boys at home, continuing their studies online and helping out with chores and spring work. So now we have agreed they do chores on every other weekend meaning Maria and I get a weekend off. That's pretty special for a dairy farmer," he explained.

The Valley Feeds enterprise, situated on the edge of town, is where Peter Griffith and Mark Murphy face the challenge of supplying a variety of productions locally with the stock feed, rations, supplement, etc they continue to need if food production doesn't falter. But here, the story is a bit different. "Cattle feed sales are down a bit, but we have a new clientele, first-time gardeners and chicken, baby turkeys and laying hen customers. "Garden seeds are completely sold out - have been for a month," he said, "and I don't think you could find a laying hen for sale. Chicks, turkeys and laying hens is completely shut down. I don't think you could find a laying hen anywhere in Canada," he added, laughing a bit at the image of first-time producers of chicken, turkey and eggs. "People



seem to be adjusting to a very changed lifestyle and are looking for ways to produce some of their own food at the same time as the activity helps calm stress and isolation from family and friends."

"We always have a regular demand for chicks, etc. but this year has more than tripled demand and we've been sold out for a couple of months."

"You know we have a great team here. Of course, we can't shut down as so many other productions have. Food production is essential and even if demand in some categories is down and our income suffers, we have a great team here, conscientious and willing to stick to the regulations about masks and gloves and our customers are also taking care."

Agricultural production has no choice, much like frontline caregivers. Tim Keenan and Peter Griffith both emphasised the importance of food production and the effort everyone involved in this field continues strong and "proud", they added.



Richmond fair bridging the gap with a drive-in

By Gordon Lambie

Richmond Fair Board members Tim Keenan and Wally Beard told The Record that, with the restrictions on the size of public gatherings and cancellation of festivals across the province, it would have been really easy to sit back this year and not do anything.

“There was no pressure,” Keenan said, “You kind-of get into that mode where it’s easier to just stay home and do nothing.”

Looking back on the conversations that led up to the planning of this year’s drive-in edition, though, the directors said that the idea of a year going by without anything at the fairgrounds just didn’t sit right with the board.

“We’ve never missed a year,” Beard said. “We didn’t talk about it, officially, but as far as I’m concerned this is the 164th edition.”

By the standard of any regular year, the 2020 edition of the Richmond Fair will be completely out of the ordinary. Set to take place on the evening of Saturday, September 12, the whole thing will happen over a matter of a few hours rather than a whole weekend. Beginning at 6:30 p.m. the gates will open for drivers to drive onto the grounds. As they make their way in to get a parking space, visitors will pass by a collection of plastic animals as well as vintage and current farm machinery on loan for display purposes. Once the sun sets and everyone is stationed in their marked parking space, a fireworks display will begin.

“All the fairs are doing a little something just to say, ‘don’t forget us,’ basically,” Keenan said, “We wanted to do a little something to thank the volunteers and exhibitors and say that we’re still here even if this is as far as the situation can go.”

Beard also underlined the fact that the event will be completely free to attend



“That’s important,” he said, pointing out that the event wouldn’t be as much of a ‘thank you’ if people had to pay for it. “Everybody comes for all the good years, but we’ve got to do something in the bad years too.”

Keenan said that all parts of the plan have already been approved by the local public health department, and he added that the board plans to check in again just before the event takes place to confirm that everything still meets public health rules and recommendations.

The much-reduced nature of the plan means that there will not be a huge cost involved, but Keenan and Beard said that whatever needs to be paid for is being covered out of pocket by the board itself.

“We considered just putting something out on our facebook page like some of the fairs have done, but Richmond is really a community fair and

we felt like, for the community, we needed to do something for the people,” Keenan said.

Beard added that he’s very pleased the plan for this year has been able to include the Scouts and the local 4H club in some way. Normally fixtures at the fair, the two organizations will be on hand to help hand out popcorn and icecream to those who choose to drive-through.

“They’ve always been involved in the fair,” Keenan agreed, sharing that he knows this has been a particularly hard year for 4H clubs everywhere. “One of my boys did a stage out west last summer and he thought about doing it again, but this was his last year in 4H to do all the shows. He decided to stay home to do all that, and now there’s nothing going on.”

Still, with restrictions and regulations changing frequently over the summer, the two directors said that

this modified version of the fair is the best the board can do.

“We’re just in what we’re in,” Keenan said. “When we were limited to ten people we thought, well that’s not really worth it.”

Under a drive-in model, where people are expected to stay mainly in their cars in properly spaced parking areas, there is no official restriction on the number of people who can attend and Beard said that he doesn’t think it likely that the event will run out of room.

“We have no idea how many people to expect,” he said while sharing that bathroom access on site will be limited.

If the weather on the Saturday doesn’t look good, the festivities will take place on Sunday the 13th

“We want people to know that we’ll be back next year,” Keenan said, sharing the hope that this plan will help bridge the gap in the meantime.



No Fair is unfair

By Derek Dolloff

the stench of coffee to wake you up! There is so much to do to make sure the heifers are looking their best by show time. Once our stomachs are rumbling enough that we can hear them over the clippers, my mom will dust the itchy hair clippings off and go get us a bite to eat at the canteen. If I am lucky, I will be able to enjoy the world's best cream cheese bagel without getting any heifer hair in my mouth! Once the heifers are prepared, it is time for me to go get decked out in my whitest of white clothes, give my heifer one last good luck brushing and pray that she behaves well in front of the judge. There is no better feeling than lining up with your heifer and being selected grand champion at your local fair!

Show day

After a quick check of the poultry barn, which I am a committee member of, we head down to the dairy barn where our ayrshire heifers wait for some breakfast and a bath. The smell of manure and wet cow is better than

help put up the silky ribbons there is nothing like getting to attach the biggest brightest ones on your own prized birds. I love the poultry barn. It is where I get away when I need a break from the sights and sounds of the fair.

Evenings at the fair

When the sun has set and heifers, ice cream booths and chickens are taken care of, we can finally go sit at the camper with friends and family and laugh about all the things that happened during the day. We can listen to the melody of music coming from the show on the grandstand that let the smell of "onion fleuri" fill our noses and convince us to visit another canteen for a tasty fair treat. My younger siblings can wave to us from the ferris wheel and then come relax on the grass and let the side effects of too much cotton candy wear off. There is nothing that makes me happier than when Ayer's Cliff fair begins and nothing that makes me sadder than when it ends and I have to impatiently wait another full year for it to come back again. Unfortunately, because of COVID-19 I have to now wait two long years to see my beloved fair again.

Ice Cream time

Once the heifers are settled down from show day it is time to head over to the Hatley 4H ice cream booth. I am a proud member and enjoy scooping out sticky ice cream cones to our customers to raise funds for our club. It is a hectic job on hot afternoons, but the reward of creating your own special cone at the end of your shift makes it totally worth it! The mouth-watering taste of cookies and cream mixed with a scoop of cookie dough topped with caramel and chocolate sauce makes life worth living.

Chicken barn

The poultry barn is the most special part of the fair to me. I raise chicks each year to bring to the Ayer's Cliff fair. I began as a member of the poultry committee at the age of six. Along with the shared responsibility of feeding, watering and caring for the animals I also get to tour the barn with the judge now. He is a very intelligent man and is teaching me a lot about poultry confirmation. There is no better thrill than to actually select the same champion bird as a seasoned judge. When I



Derek Dolloff 2019, getting ready to go in the ring.

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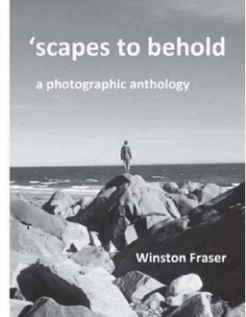
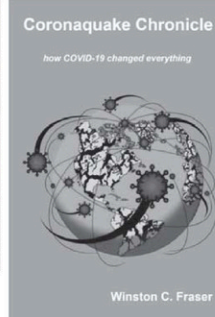


Derek Dolloff 2017, after winning his class.

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by Winston Fraser

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4H: The youth who “built the fairs”

By Matthew Sylvester
Special to the Record

Out of everyone feeling the hit of not being able to enjoy the fairs this year, members of local 4H clubs are bound to be on top of that list. 4H'ers are a constant presence and driving force behind our yearly rural fairs. The Record spoke to a few of those involved with the Sawyerville 4H group to see how their members felt about putting the year on hold.

Amanda Kirby is one of the two parent leaders in Sawyerville's club. Even though she's a leader, she explained that she's only there to make sure all the kids follow the rules. “They do

everything by themselves,” she said. “They even hold elections to choose their President, Vice President, their Secretary.”

4H's motto is “Learn by doing,” and the youth aged 6 to 25 that make up its membership take that motto to heart. When organizing their signature ice cream fundraising stand at the Cookshire fair, the club will form a committee to handle all aspects: people to buy the ice cream, to organize the stand, and to spend time selling.

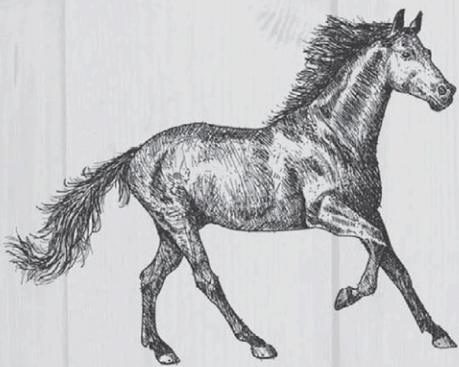
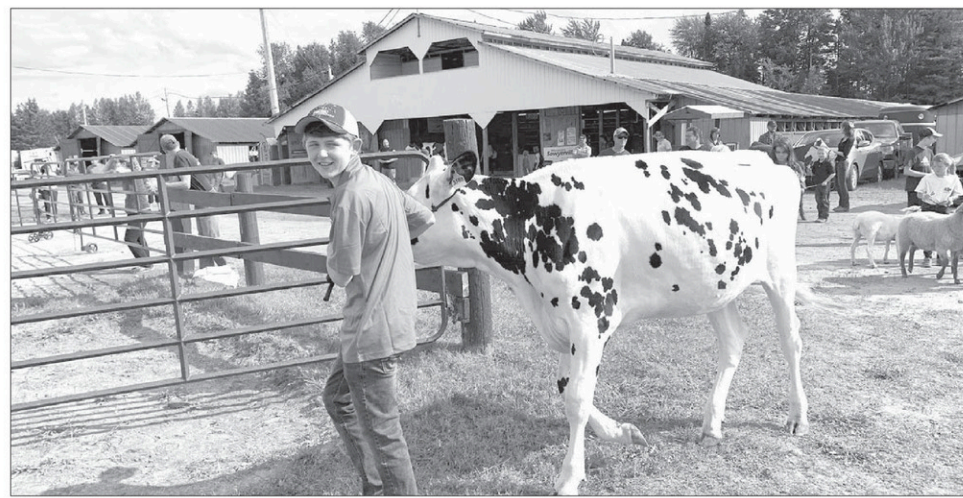
“It's been really disappointing without the fair,” said Kendra Parnell, past Sawyerville President and member since she was a young teen. Normally fair time is a huge part of being in the

club. Many members raise animals all on their own, without any help from parents, and enter them into the 4H only competitions on Friday evening. The kids put so much time and effort into raising their animals and the fair represents a time for their work to finally be recognized.

Sawyerville's club celebrated their centennial year back in 2013. For more than 100 years, the 4H has been a huge part of the Cookshire fair. “When you look at the board members, the people who come back every year, it's the 4H that built the fair,” said Brandon Ward, president of the fair's board of directors. It's those who spent so much of their youth immersed in the world of

4H and the fairs who end up wanting to give back to the community that built them.

A few years ago, the Cookshire fair had their entire weekend washed out by the rain, and they lost a lot of money in entry bracelet sales. The Sawyerville 4H club stepped up to plan a fundraising dance the next summer to help make up the losses. Every club from the area has its own signature fair. Like Sawyerville has Cookshire, Hatley's 4H has Ayer's Cliff. They're a source of pride and fun for all members, which makes it so much harder to see them cancelled this year.



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PHOTOS BY LINDA ANNESLEY HOY.

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Ayer's Cliff Fair documentary aims to educate people about local agriculture

By Michael Boriero - Local Journalism Initiative Reporter

Like hundreds of other events, the Ayer's Cliff Fair fell victim to the ongoing pandemic, but people still have a chance to get their county fair fix through a documentary filmed and edited by Ogden resident Louise Abbott.

A well-known writer and documentary filmmaker, Abbott was commissioned by the Ayer's Cliff Fair board to capture the atmosphere at the yearly event, explore its history and agricultural impact on the community.

"It takes a look at the history and contemporary role of the fair but there are many fair scenes, which I think is wonderful during these Covid times when the fair has been cancelled," she said in a phone interview with The Record.

The film was supposed to be a main draw at the fair with the board designating a rented tent for viewers to watch the documentary on a

continuous loop. However, things changed when the pandemic struck Quebec soil.

Abbott said the fair board originally decided to drop her content on social media, but Angus McKinnon, the board's former president, had another idea. He suggested creating a makeshift drive-in movie theatre, which the board immediately jumped on.

"People are so passionate about the fair and it really comes through, the whole spirit, the community spirit, and I think that's reflected in the fact that they're going to do this drive-in event," Abbott said.

She started to work on the film several years ago, but only began intensive filming in 2018. She spent time capturing behind-the-scenes moments including the preparation and dismantling of the fair. She even captured aerial shots using a drone in 2019.

But the crux of the documentary lies in its interviews with local farmers and other passionate members of the



community. The fair was used as a means to showcase livestock and local produce, Abbott explained, but over time something changed.

"I think that now the role has become more about educating the public about agriculture," said Abbott. "It's hard for some of us to believe it, but people really don't understand where milk comes from or how the dairy industry really works."

The fair being cancelled was a major loss, she continued, the farmers there are very friendly and they love talking to people. There's a bit more interchange than some other fairs, Abbott said, and you certainly feel that friendly atmosphere in the barns.

She noted that with the number of farms in the area going down, the Ayer's Cliff Fair plays an even greater role in the future generation of farmers and other agricultural sectors. Board members are aware of the responsibility they have to inspire the youth.

"The other important role that it plays is in trying to encourage young people to go into agriculture and you'll see at the fair the 4H presence is very

strong because that's going to ensure the longevity of local agriculture," said Abbott.

The movie as well as a concert by local band Slightly Haggard will offered rain or shine on Friday, August 28 and on Saturday, August 29 on the Ayer's Cliff Fairgrounds.

Gates will open at 7 p.m. through the entrance on Main Street.

A screen 32 feet wide by 16 feet high will be erected to present Louise Abbott's film as well as the Slightly Haggard.

Fireworks will also be presented on the two nights. The municipality of Ayer's Cliff will take care of the fireworks on Friday and Sonia Nepton will do the presentation on Saturday.

Slightly Haggard will perform after the fireworks and the show will be broadcast directly on the giant screen both evenings.

The sound for the presentation and concert will be transmitted via an FM station on your radio.

Tickets can be purchased online by going to the Ayer's Cliff Fair website www.ayersclifffair.com or their facebook page.



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Memories of a summer fair

By Mead Baldwin

This coming weekend I would normally be at the Ayer's Cliff Fair.

About ten years ago my sister Louise mentioned the Fair and that perhaps I should enter something at the Horticultural Society Building. She wondered what flowers I had at my house in Waterville. I really couldn't tell her as I don't know or pay attention to flowers. The conversation got me thinking though, and that summer I began baking for the fair. I obtained a Fair book, which describes all the contest categories, and baked four pies, dozens of cookies, various breads, muffins, Chili, Spaghetti sauce, and a diabetic dessert. I won four firsts, numerous seconds and thirds, (My Chili took first place), and I have been hooked ever since.

I guess my passion for the fair, (there's really only one worth mentioning, in Ayer's Cliff) began many years ago. In grade school in Coaticook we received seed packets in the spring, and grew them over the summer to enter in the fall fair. I was part of the school square dance team, though I sometimes suspected that I was chosen because my height matched that of my female partner. I entered every contest available to earn spending money. One dollar for first, 90 cents for second, etc down to a dime for tenth place. I wrote essays, drew posters, packed box lunches, made crafts, basically anything that might win me a prize. Yes, I was an obnoxious, competitive kid.

As I grew older, the midway became the place to be. The rides were great as were the booths where you could win stuffed toys by shooting at targets or throwing tokens in bottles. Then there were the talent contests. Eager young singers and pianists would compete for first place. Having no musical talent whatsoever, some of us in Baldwin's Mills created comedy skits to enter instead, and we did surprisingly well. I always suspected that the judges enjoyed the change from all the young ingénues. My younger brother Paul brought our ponies, and earned money giving rides to the younger kids. Eventually, as I grew older, summer jobs and other adventures took me away from the fair.

When I moved to New Brunswick at 24, I discovered the Charlo Fall Fair. I won my first baking prize, first place,

for a mincemeat pie covered with a latticework of pastry and cherries. I have to thank my Aunt Ruby for the mincemeat. I also discovered the joy of running a midway game booth. I had started a little league baseball team, and as coach, I needed money for equipment, so I created a game. I took some heavy plywood, painted it green, and drilled holes of different sizes to represent 1st base, 2nd base, 3rd base and home plate. It helps to know a friend with a router. Eager contestants would throw baseballs at the holes to earn money and prizes. We cleared \$350, which was a lot of money in 1981. My baseball teammates and I were the carnival barkers. I have to confess that though getting a home run was possible, it was highly unlikely.

In 1984 I moved to Fitzroy Harbour, northwest of Ottawa. There I discovered the Carp Fair, which became part of my life for over 20 years. I discovered a new aspect of fair culture, the food court. Our church ran a fast food booth, selling back bacon on buns, with coffee, homemade pie, doughnuts, and other assorted items. We worked long hours, and over the years had to compete with a wide assortment of new food fads. Our booth remained popular, both for the food and the conversation. We counted on the money to run our various church programs, plus pay my salary. When my kids got older, the fair became an essential part of their lives too. Carp Fair was the third weekend of September and local schools always closed on the Friday of the fair. There were special events for the children on that day, and who doesn't love the rides on the midway.

Eleven years ago, I returned to the Townships after 30 years of living in other provinces. Many things had changed. I got lost driving through Sherbrooke. Schools had closed, churches were sold, villages looked different, and many old friends had long since moved away. One thing hadn't changed much though, the Ayer's Cliff Fair. It is still the same weekend in August. The 4 H clubs still bring young people with their calves to judge. There are still horse races and midway rides. My sister Louise still wins first place for her flowers. I also like winning the baking contests (Top prize in baking, 3 years running). The fair remains a vital part of Townships life, and for that I am very grateful. This summer I will miss it due to the pandemic, but next year I have a trophy to defend.



Mead Baldwin with his prize-winning baking for the Ayer's Cliff Fair





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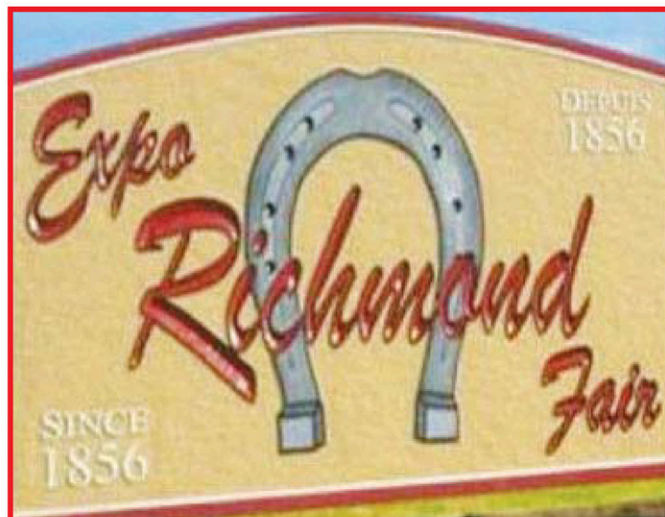




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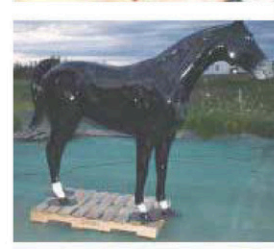
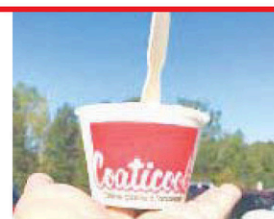
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Judging in fairs: worth more than just the prize money

By Matthew Sylvester
Special to the Record

Farmers, animal owners, and breeders from all over came to show their animals at regional fairs last year. It's a fun spectacle for onlookers in the grandstands to see the beautifully groomed animals paraded through a track and in front of judges, but the big coloured ribbon is worth much more than just bragging rights to those who put so much of their time into their show animals.

Callum McKinven is a world-renowned professional livestock judge and operator of Lookout Farm in Hatley Township. On his farm, he raises a mix of around 150 purebred Holsteins, Jerseys and Brown Swiss cows that have a habit of winning prizes at fairs all over North America. For McKinven, the cancellation of fairs means that his whole business is stuck on hold.

"It's all about networking," McKinven said. He explained how a breeder who deals with a modest amount of purebred show cows has to be able to network with potential buyers in order to get their livestock sold. "Without being able to go judge or show at any fairs this year, people won't be able to do that." McKinven used to travel down to the World Dairy Expo in the United States each year to build up a network of people to sell animals and embryos.

The placing of your animal can go a long way in determining the price that you can get for it, too. It's a big reason why so many take the time to meticulously raise their cattle to look and perform the best they possibly can. Keeping your animals in tip top shape can get pretty pricey too, meaning the losses that breeders have to take aren't just in potential profits.

When asked how losing the opportunity to show animals would affect him, Johnville farmer and long-time participant in the Cookshire fair David Grey said that the biggest loss for him was in the social value. "You get so caught up in your own thing that sometimes you only see your neighbor once a year, and that's at the fair," he said.

Judging was a big part of that. It gave farmers reason to go and visit all the local fairs to meet new people. "If you didn't like the opinion one judge had of your cows," he said, "you could just go out to Brome or Ayer's Cliff the next weekend and enter another competition."

Nobody was ever too good for the small fairs. Even though McKinven travels to around 20 shows a year all over the world and was voted #1 livestock judge worldwide 7 years ago, he still comes to regional fairs like Cookshire every once in a while.

Grey told The Record he was worried that getting to enjoy the social bonds created by fairs might be a thing of the past after a year off. To him, there's a big risk that people might start to think that all the effort, time and money they've been putting into preparing their animals wasn't worth it. If enough people start to drift away, the core of what fairs have

always meant for people in the Townships might not survive much longer.



Judging in Japan

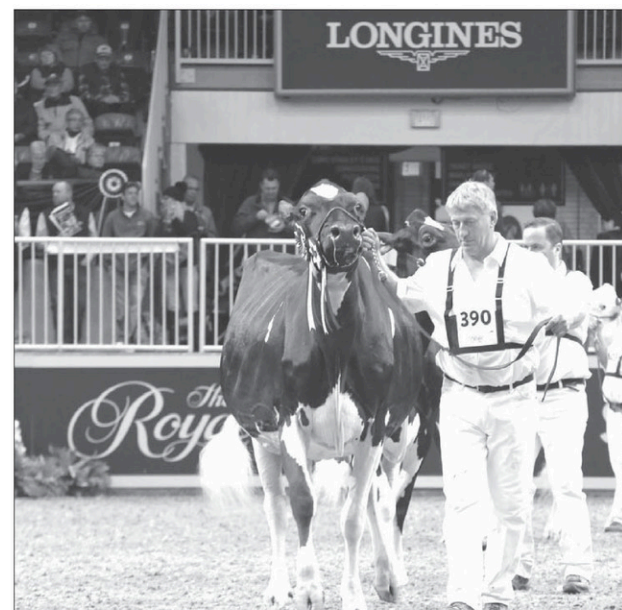


PHOTO COURTESY OF CALLUM MCKINVEN

The longstanding tradition of animal judging brings people together and helps farmers network their livestock, says Callum McKinven (pictured).



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Cookshire microbrewery takes pride in using local products

By Michael Boriero – Local Journalism Initiative Reporter

With the success of the Fair Beer at the Cookshire County Fair last year, Cookshire-Eaton based microbrewery 11 comtés intended to distribute its special lager to a wider range of Quebec fairs, but the pandemic threw a wrench in their plans.

According to Simon Lafrance, production manager at 11 comtés, the outbreak of COVID-19 ultimately felled their negotiations with other fairs, although they faced another point of contention over the price.

Lafrance explained that county events typically partner with large beer distributors to alleviate costs. But even though the Fair Beer comes at a slightly greater price tag, he said they managed to do quite well in Cookshire at the unveiling of their new beer.

“The beer was a hit,” said Lafrance. “We didn’t sell huge amounts, but we definitely interested a lot of people. They were also serving Bud or Bud Light at the same event, but since then people came from everywhere to buy this specific beer.”

The lager quickly sold out after the event, he added, and it remains one of their most popular brews. What sets them apart from typical, run-of-the-mill breweries is the fact that they keep everything local, he said.

The microbrewery prides itself on getting the whole Quebec community involved, not just residents from Cookshire-Eaton. Lafrance said there’s no other option than trying to keep everything homegrown. This is ingrained in their business identity.

“We use fruit from literally our neighbours in Cookshire, our malt is malted in Sherbrooke, so we try to source everything as local as possible,” Lafrance said.

Two years ago they started an initiative involving the community at large, not just farmers. In 2018 and 2019, 11 comtés offered hop plants to residents in the area. The idea was for people to grow their own hops to be used in the microbrewery’s beer.



COURTESY PHOTOS

They wanted patrons to feel more involved in the process and, according to Lafrance, the project went off without a hitch. They gave out nearly 400 plants in two years, and while not everyone yielded useable product, the turnout was substantial.

Old photos they discovered from the late 19th century inspired management at 11 comtés to pursue this project. The photos show Bury residents growing their own hops beside a busy road. They figured people would be interested in taking part in local agriculture.

“We ask people around the right time of the year, so we tell them it’s ready to pick and then we describe how to judge if the hop is ready,” he said. “They pick it and take it to the brewery where we brew it within the same day or week.”





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Brome fair goes virtual

By Matthew Sylvester
Special to the Record

For over 160 years, the tiny village of Brome has been host to the biggest rural agricultural fair in Quebec. Its population of only 250 swells to more than 40,000 for four days out of the year as people from all around the region come to show their animals, watch truck pulls, or just spend some time on the midway's rides.

Back in March of this year, by demand from the Ministry of Agriculture, Fisheries and Food, all agricultural gatherings were cancelled for the summer. For the first time since the second world war, the massive Brome Fair was cancelled along with the rest of them. "It just didn't make sense to go through with the fair with the limit of 250 people," said Lee Patterson, President of the Brome Fair's board of directors. Instead, a dedicated team of volunteers put together a virtual competition to keep the spirit of the fair alive.

Participants had until the Aug. 17 to make their submissions into the fair's 12 different virtual classes. They ranged from baking to horticulture, to animal showing and handicrafts. A special class was chosen to be brought in and judged in person instead of online. That class

was chocolate cookies, of course. While there wasn't a budget for cash prizes, special ribbons were given out to the winning entrants.

Submissions were made online by sending in pictures and videos of the food, plants, or animals to be judged. For those sending in their animals, each participant was given guidelines on how to take their video, how long it should be, and what to have the animal do. "Even though the Brome fair has evolved over the years, we're still a traditional small fair so we wanted to keep those traditions alive," Patterson said.

Board member Lisa Payne was a big part of the organization of the youth section of the virtual fair. A partnership with the Townshippers' Association's Bright Beginnings program let them give out prizes to the lucky winners from East Farnham and Compton.

In total, the fair received submissions from an impressive 125 people, including some from countries like Sweden and England. While it's a far cry from the typical tens of thousands usually there, Patterson emphasized that the virtual fair was mostly a way to keep connected with the people who held the fair really close to their hearts.

"One of the goals we had was to really keep contact with the people who come

back every year," he said. For many families, there's a longstanding tradition of getting together in Brome to show their animals. For others, it's just a chance to meet up with people who they don't get to see anywhere else.

Payne explained that in the long

term, the board is getting ready for the worst case scenario of needing to make 2021's fair virtual too. "We hope we'll get to be there in person, but if we can't, it'll be bigger and better next year," she said.



PHOTO COURTESY OF LISA PAYNE

Rosie, Avigaelle and Ellianah from the Court family show off the prizes they won from Brome's 2020 cyber edition next to fair Director Gloria Robinson (left) and Townshippers' representative Lisa Payne.



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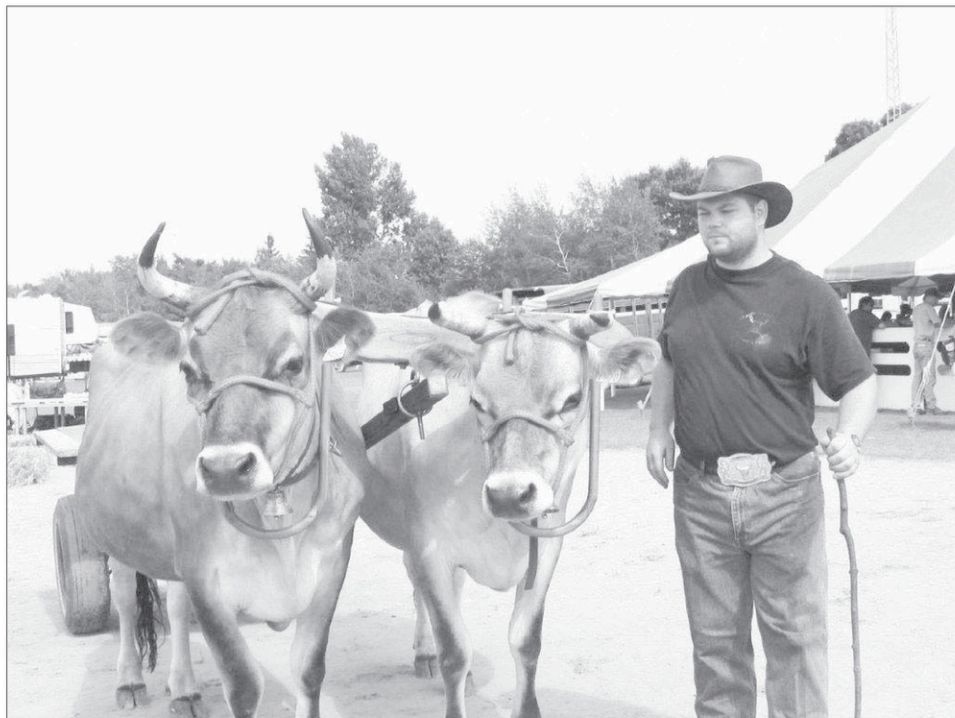
Fairs will weather the storm

By Claudia Villemaire

It's almost hard to believe. County and regional and provincial agricultural exhibitions will not open their gates this summer. At least not for the usual days of competitions, displays, stage shows and the ever-popular carnivals. But fair boards, historically dedicated to preparing 'fair' days filled with a variety of things to do and see have been brainstorming since March, coming up with ideas that will keep exhibitors encouraged and fairgoers interested.

A sample of keeping that fair fever alive are the projects at Richmond and Brome. Both have been inspired with ideas that range from presenting videos of individual exhibitors with their animals, crafts, flowers or whatever else they planned to bring to this year's event. With spectators safely parked and remaining in their vehicles, free access to the grounds and, in the case of Richmond, rewarding the folks who take the time to attend with ice cream and popcorn and even fireworks. Keeping the memory of past fairs alive, the weekend or longer event which has taken over six weekends in the Eastern Townships for nearly 200 years has been a priority for the determined boards of directors. When one

considers the dedication and expense of preparing animals for the showing, and modern technology, the possibility of keeping the public interested becomes a determination. Ayer's Cliff, poised to celebrate their 175th anniversary almost welcomed the time the cancellation allowed and projects that would have been difficult to complete are taking shape with a huge celebration planned for next year. Fair boards across the Townships have been catching up with maintenance and repair projects. Brome fair has repaired and renewed the big stage area, Richmond has completed a new office and made important repairs to the facility and although other fairs have not returned calls, local folks are talking about the repaired and refreshed buildings and grounds. No fair, in many cases, affects the folks who plan summer family get togethers, local merchants, 4-Hers, especially the first-timers classes for the youngest who have been counting the days since last year's event. The county fair, where city meets country as Ayer's Cliff Fair motto states, has traditionally served as a window on local agriculture, an event bringing the region's best animals to the showing, showcasing the talents of local cooks and crafters, spotlighting merchants and merchandise in their kiosks, offered



entertainment to all ages and been the events which bring families and friends together for their annual visit. Several generations either take part in the various categories or simply come to visit. This is the Townships' largest and most varied event on the social calendar and no director with their county fair as a priority will take these

cancellations as a death knell of county fairs. It's far too important and every board of administrators is working at plans and projects to ensure they'll be back next year - hopefully. Folks are encouraged to check out the Townships fairs' websites for more information, dates and times.

Since 2012, Danville has had an Argo-rural committee. Also, the city has reserved a seat on the Planning Advisory Committee to represent farmers in matters relating to green areas. During various consultations, one or more seats are reserved for farmers in order to know their points of view.

All of these measures show just how critically important agriculture, the main driver of Danville's economy, is.

The Danville Council wishes to pay tribute today to the agricultural producers in its territory for their undeniable contribution to the community, as well as to tell them that it will continue, within the limits of its powers, to provide them with the support needed.

*Michel A. Plourde,
Mayor*



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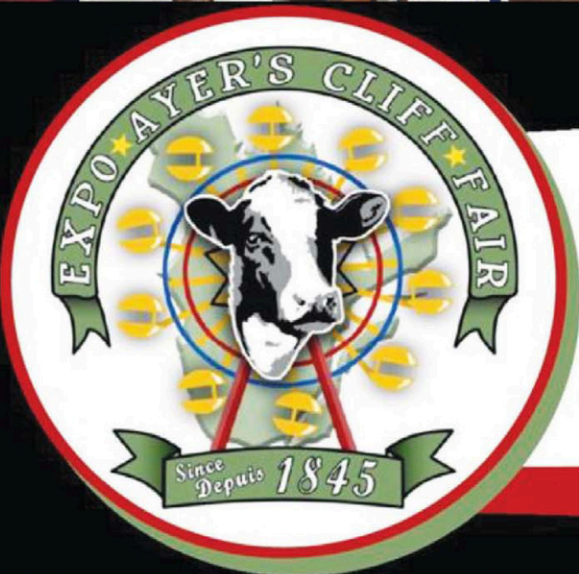
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