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First Ever Solano County Virtual Fair and Online Livestock Auction are a Success

Junior Livestock Exhibitors were also able to have a live show with judging and champion awards.

Solano County, CA – The first ever Virtual Solano County Fair took place this past weekend, starting on Thursday, June 18 and continuing through Sunday, June 21. This was a trail-blazing effort for the Solano County Fair Association (SCFA) who embarked on the endeavor without a “road-map” but with an intense desire to continue its 70+ years of bringing the Solano County Fair to the community. This new and innovative Virtual Fair has received, and continues to receive, industry recognition as a leading example for fairs and other events across the nation.

Using their web site as the main portal, the Solano County Fair Association (SCFA) live streamed the broadcast across multiple social media platforms including their Facebook page, Twitter feed and YouTube channel. “Since this was the first time we’ve ever done anything like this, we really didn’t know what to expect as far as the response we’d get,” stated SCFA Board Member (and AKA “Virtual Fair Superintendent”), Manuel Angel. “We were blown away by how many people, organizations and sponsors wanted to support our efforts and by the fantastic content they shared with us for the broadcast. During the Virtual Fair we had a constant stream of viewers that really seemed to be enjoying posting their comments on how great the entertainment was and how fun it was to share the experience with their friends and family on social media.”

Baseline numbers for the Virtual Fair show that the broadcast had 4,997 viewers and just under 363 hours of watch time. These numbers will continue to grow as people view the broadcasts via recorded sessions which can be accessed through the SCFA web site at SCFair.com. “My original goal was to have around 5,000 ‘eyeballs’ on the event over the four days,” stated Angel. “I’m really pleased that we were able to make that goal and then exceed it as people watch the replays.” The SCFA relied on a completely organic outreach program for the Virtual Fair, meaning



that no funds were spent on paid advertising for the event, using only their social media platforms to spread the word.

The Fair's annual livestock program and auction also saw many firsts this year, including having the Junior Livestock Auction held in an online format. The auction opened for bidding at noon on Friday, June 19 with a staggered close starting at 1:30 p.m. on Saturday, June 20 and was a huge success. Animals were sold by the "lot" which is a single animal or in the case of some rabbits, a pen of three. 74 lots were available for bidding during the auction which raised a gross total of \$121,445. The average lot price was \$1,641, an impressive \$331 per lot or 25% increase over last year. "We are thrilled with this year's Junior Livestock Auction results," stated SCFA Board President, Carole Paterson. "We can't say thank you enough to all of the auction participants who placed their bids in support of our youth exhibitors. This has been a challenging year for them and to have all of their hard work pay off in such a magnificent way means the world to them."

Youth livestock competitors across the nation have been faced with the elimination of live showing of their animals due to COVID-19 health restrictions and that was a potential situation for the Solano County Fair as well. Fortunately, the Fair's Livestock Superintendent, Kelly Fletcher, was able to put together a detailed plan which outlined how a live show could be possible. Solano County Public Health reviewed and approved the plan and was an integral partner in enabling the Solano County Fair to have a condensed live competition for exhibitors. In addition to exhibitors being able to have the experience of showing their animals for a judge, they were also able to receive placings and determination of champions for the livestock auction, something few fairs have been able to do so far this year.

Another first for the Solano County Fair was moving its Youth Solano Living program to a virtual exhibition. These "still exhibits" include arts and crafts, clothing and textiles, graphic arts, photography, horticulture and more. This year, the competition was limited to youth exhibitors



and required entrants to submit their entries via the usual online entry process. Instead of physically bringing their items to the Fairgrounds though, they submitted photos of their entries for judging and online display. There were 102 exhibitors in the 2020 Youth Solano Living program who submitted photos of 420 items for judging. These numbers are roughly half of the totals for the live exhibition at the 2019 Fair. All judged photo entries can be viewed at SCFair.com in online galleries in the Solano County Fair section of the web site.

Established in 1949 to produce the annual County Fair, the Solano County Fair Association is a 501(c)3 non-profit agency that is governed by a Board of Directors which is appointed by the Solano County Board of Supervisors. The Solano County Fair Association has been providing educational, cultural, artistic, commercial and recreational programs to the residents of Solano County for over 70 years. The mission of the Solano County Fair Association is “to ensure a positive experience for the public by providing a year-round multi-purpose venue that showcases and celebrates the wide variety of resources and activities available to our diverse community.”

All of the following sources are available to get the latest updates and announcements about the annual Solano County Fair as well as year-round Fairgrounds activities:

- visit the Fairgrounds’ web site, SCFair.com;
- follow on Facebook at “Solano County Fairgrounds”;
- follow on Twitter at @scfair;
- follow on Instagram at SCFairgrounds; or
- sign up on the Fairgrounds’ web site to receive email blasts and newsletters.

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