

County fairs have significant history in every county of this state. Although many people have lost their connection to the fair, there are a tremendous number of lessons and life skills learned through the participation at county fairs...as well as memories made!! Whether you have memories of being in a pedal tractor pool contest as a youngster, winning a ribbon for a talent contest you participated in or maybe a peewee showmanship class you got the option to participate in before you were old enough to be in 4H... Maybe it was watching your first rodeo that was held in conjunction with the only fair or even having the sweet taste of cotton candy from a food truck. Maybe you had the opportunity to learn how to make your grandma's famous cinnamon rolls and submitted them an open class at your local county fair? Maybe your mom taught you how to sew and you submitted a project from your hard work... Or you learned how to can applesauce with your grandparents or you taught yourself how to plant seeds and grow a garden and exhibited the fruits of your labor?

County fairs are the epitome community, connection, education, pride and teamwork. Showing and exhibiting hard work, diligence, creativity and your ability to share what you've done with others in your community. Whether you are an adult with hobbies that you can share or you are a first year 4-H member learning all there is to learn about fishing, cooking, sewing, woodworking, photography, or how to raise and show a market or breeding animal. Maybe you are an FFA member raising your own herd of beef cattle and you are finally showing your own animals in that market class...something you have worked diligently for years to get the genetics you need to be competitive with your peers! Maybe you are winning your first belt buckle as you won the livestock judging contest or the tractor driving contest your local fair holds or the floral design contest you compete in every year...or the ag in the classroom lesson you and your chapter provide for fair visitors to share your knowledge about agriculture. Maybe it's the thousands of dollars and hours you have invested in a project that you have incredible pride in-selling your market steer so that you can invest in another one for the next year or to help save for college.

County fairs do more than offer a place to have community members get together-they provide life lessons and create memories for a lifetime. Some of my absolute favorite memories from childhood are from meeting new friends at fair and taking in all of the opportunities that were available from it. As an adult, I have the opportunity to watch My students thrive as they raise and show animals, drive tractors, offer education, volunteer for various activities held at the fair and fairgrounds throughout the years and become responsible, engaged community members who then serve others so that the tradition continues.