



## **FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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### **Merced County Fair Board Announces Retirement of CEO Teresa Burrola**

*Longtime Fair employee turned CEO will retire after the 2025 Fair, leaving an enduring legacy*

**MERCED, CALIFORNIA, December 20, 2024** – The Merced County Fair Board announced that Teresa Burrola will retire July 1, 2025 after 27 years with the Fair, including nine as CEO. The 2025 Merced County Fair will be the last with Teresa at the helm, concluding a tenure in which she oversaw significant changes from major capital improvements to expanded entertainment and events, and skillfully navigated the COVID-19 pandemic.

“It has been an honor of a lifetime to lead the Merced County Fair and work alongside our incredible Board and staff,” said Teresa Burrola, CEO of the Merced County Fair. “Almost a decade ago as I took on this role, I committed to putting ideas into action, improving our Fair for the community, and making it something they could be proud of. With the support of my team and Board, we have accomplished a lot with more plans for the future. I am so proud that the Merced County Fair is in a strong position to succeed having navigated unprecedented events to only emerge stronger and more resolute to be here for generations to come – serving the community in times of need and, of course, in times of celebration!”

Teresa’s near-decade of leadership as CEO of the Merced County Fair has resulted in many notable achievements:

- Aligned the Fair’s marketing efforts under one new team to elevate the profile of the annual Fair in 2016, and debuted a vibrant new Fair corporate logo.
- Brought Hispanic entertainment back to the annual Fair in 2016, along with new shows in the Grandstand.
- Established the annual Pre-Party to kick off the Fair season and raise funds to support the Merced County Fair. In the 9 years since its launch, the event has grown to nearly 400 attendees.
- Successfully navigated the COVID-19 pandemic in 2020 and 2021, which shut down the Fair and most fairground operations. Pivoted to hold drive-thru food events to sustain some Fair operations, as well as provide the community with a safe way to enjoy a bit of the Fair tradition they missed. Shifted to a virtual livestock auction in 2020 to ensure 4-H and FFA students were able to sell their animal projects, then a hybrid in-person and virtual show in 2021.
- Prior to COVID-19 in 2019, the Fair earned \$398,273 in rental income. After navigating the negative impact of COVID-19 on the overall fairground’s operations in 2020 and 2021, the Fair is now back to normal operating conditions and have managed to grow its rental program to \$480,691 in 2024, continuing to service the community with affordable rental options for events.
- Assisted with emergency response services at the fairgrounds, which served as the fire camp and staging site for Cal Fire during the Detweiler Fire in 2017 and Oak Fire in 2022, as well as an emergency evacuation center for the residents of Planada and Merced during the tragic floods of 2022, among other emergencies.

**35th District Agricultural Association**

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- Expanded community programs such as the annual food drive with the Merced County Food Bank, which has collected over 30,000 lbs. of food for those in need in the community.
- Collaborated with the Fair's sponsorship team to bring in Valley Children's Healthcare as the presenting sponsor of the Fair in 2022, providing free admission for all kids 12 and under and making the Fair more affordable for families to enjoy.
- Championed, oversaw and secured funding for the following capital improvement projects:
  - New emergency lighting in Grandstands in 2017.
  - Remodeled the Lodge in 2018 for year-round rentals and established it as the Friends of the Fair Hospitality Lounge during the annual Fair. Friends of the Fair are currently adding restrooms to the building.
  - New cell tower on the grounds in 2018.
  - Completed a \$455,000 underground water main system project in 2018.
  - Tree removal and replanting of Sequoia redwoods along Martin Luther King Jr. Way for safety and beautification in 2019.
  - New roofs on the Administration and El Captain buildings in 2023, a \$161,040 project.
  - New nearly \$1 million HVAC system in the Pavilion Building in 2023.
  - Secured a \$5 million Fairgrounds Resilience Center grant in 2023 to upgrade Yosemite Hall with a large commercial kitchen, HVAC system, and new entrance, along with a new roof for the Pavilion building.

"Teresa Burrola's leadership has been transformative for the Merced County Fair. Over her nearly three decades with the Fair, including nine as CEO, she has left a lasting mark through her dedication, creative vision, and passion for our community. Her legacy of growth, innovation, and resilience will continue to inspire us for years to come. The Merced County Fair will always be grateful for Teresa's service and the strong foundation she has built," said Luis Lara, President of the Merced County Fair Board of Directors.

Teresa grew up in Sonora and moved to Merced at 14. After graduating from Merced High School in 1978, Teresa started working at Farmers Insurance, where she was employed for 19 years. When her office closed in 1998, she switched industries and went to work at the Merced County Fair as a temporary office technician. She was hired full-time later in 1998 by then-CEO Cheryl Davidson, and was promoted to business assistant in 2002. Teresa worked for four different CEOs (Cheryl Davidson, Robin Hauck, Pat Kress and Tom Musser) before being named as Merced County Fair CEO in 2015. Teresa will join her husband, Chris, in retirement, enjoying some much-anticipated travel and spending quality time with their grandchildren.

"Teresa's passion for the Fair and the community, coupled with her drive to get things done, made her such an effective and enjoyable leader," said Mark Erreca, Board Member and Board President in 2015 when Teresa was hired. "Thank you, Teresa, for all your years of service to our Fair, and unwavering leadership through some difficult times for the fair industry. We are in a better place as a Fair and fairground because of you. Looking forward to making your last Fair the best Merced County Fair yet!"



The Merced County Fair Board will share more details regarding the CEO Search in the weeks ahead.

**About The Merced County Fair:**

The Merced County Fair, first founded in 1891, represents the 35th District Agricultural Association. The Fair's mission statement outlines that it "*promises to meet the needs of our community by providing a fun, safe venue to celebrate our area's agricultural heritage, discover new technology and be entertained.*" This year marks the 132<sup>nd</sup> year of operation for the Merced County Fair. The Merced County Fair annually welcomes nearly 70,000 people from throughout Merced County and beyond to attend the five-day fair each June. Members of the Board of Directors include: President, Luis Lara; First Vice President, Mark Erreca; Second Vice President, Emily Haden; Vicky Banaga; Lori Rossi Gallo; Mark N. Pazin; Kim Rogina; and Carol Sartori-Silva. Teresa Burrola heads up the daily operations in her role as CEO. The 2025 Merced County Fair will return to kick off the summer, June 4 - 8. For more information about the Merced County Fair, please visit [www.MercedCountyFair.com](http://www.MercedCountyFair.com). Connect with the Fair on Facebook ([@mercedfair](https://www.facebook.com/mercedfair)), Twitter ([@Merced\\_CA\\_Fair](https://twitter.com/Merced_CA_Fair)), Instagram ([@mercedcountyfair](https://www.instagram.com/mercedcountyfair)) and Tik Tok ([@mercedcountyfair](https://www.tiktok.com/@mercedcountyfair)).

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