



June 8-12, 2022
Back & Bigger Than Ever
35th District Agricultural Association



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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THE 2022 MERCED COUNTY FAIR RETURNED IN A BIG AND SAFE WAY THANKS TO COMMUNITY SUPPORT OF THIS ANNUAL TRADITION AFTER A TWO-YEAR HIATUS

MERCED, CALIFORNIA – June 28, 2022: The Merced County Fair's Board of Directors, Management and staff want to thank the community for coming out to support the 2022 Merced County Fair presented by Valley Children's Healthcare as it returned June 8 – 12 for a Fair that was "Bigger and Better Than Ever" after a two-year hiatus thanks to incredible support from the community. During the fair's five-day run, the community enjoyed delicious food, great entertainment, carnival rides, incredible exhibits and new free attractions like the Pee Wee Stampede sponsored by Valley Children's Healthcare, Save Mart and Joseph Farms Cheese. The attendance figures for the 2022 Merced County Fair are still being audited and are not yet ready for release; however, the large crowds each day indicate the attendance total will surpass the 64,536 people that attended the 2019 Merced County Fair.

"We cannot express the level of gratitude we have for our community who came out for the return of their community fair!" said Teresa Burrola, CEO, Merced County Fair. "Our community had missed one another and came out for the best reunion to kick-off the summer at the Merced County Fair. Lots of laughs, smiles and memories were made enjoying all that the Fair brings to our Merced County. It felt so good to be back!"

Safety and affordability were the big focuses as the Merced County Fair returned! At Opening Ceremonies, Sheriff Warnke accepted the prestigious 2022 Blue Ribbon Award on behalf of the Merced County Sheriff's Office for its role in leading the Fair's extensive safety plans, which included collaboration with Merced County Adult and Juvenile Probation, Merced Police Department, Merced Fire Department and Riggs Ambulance Service to provide the safest Fair possible. The Blue Ribbon Award was created by the Western Fairs Association (WFA) to recognize those who support and contribute to the quality of fairs – and is one of the highest honors a fair can give out. Valley Children's Healthcare, the Fair's new presenting sponsor, was also honored at Opening Ceremonies with the 2022 Outstanding Sponsor of the Year Award.

On the savings front – there were plenty of options! Anyone who donated 5 cans of food from May 16 through June 8 at the Merced or Atwater MERCO Credit Unions received a free admission ticket good for Opening Day of the Fair as part of the "Feed Our Community" food drive benefitting the Merced County Food Bank. A total of 2,931 lbs. of food was collected to help fight hunger in Merced County. For the first time ever, kids 12 and under were free into the Fair every day, providing an incredible savings for families. Plus, Fairgoers were able to save \$3 on Adult Admission and \$5 on Unlimited Carnival Ride Wristbands when purchased at participating Save Mart and FoodMaxx locations, as well as O'Reilly Auto Parts stores for the discounted admission both before and throughout the Fair. The savings continued as the Fair opened with the return of Dignity Health - Mercy Medical Center's "We Care Wednesday" presented by MERCO Credit Union on Opening Day, June 8, which welcomed seniors 62 and



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better for free all evening long, plus featured a special Seniors' Lifestyle Expo. Also, during the Fair, people were able to enjoy free rides to the fairgrounds from the Downtown Transpo Center thanks to a partnership with The Bus; a total of 129 passengers took advantage of this service.

During the five days of the Fair, the Grandstand was busy with excitement, especially on opening night as the Merced Speedway Auto Racing brought back the IMCA Modifieds and IMCA Sport Mods for a free night of racing, (6/8), new to the Fair this year was the Destruction Derby (6/9), plus Valley Tractor Pullers' Tractor Pull (6/10), Humpz & Hornz: Bulls, Broncs & Barrels (6/11) and a Jaripeo (6/12) to close out the Fair – all made possible thanks to sponsors Coors Light, O'Reilly Auto Parts, Save Mart and FoodMaxx. Fairgoers also enjoyed free live music and entertainment on the Coors Light Stage and the Dignity Health – Mercy Medical Center Stage, not to mention the Outdoor Theatre where an incredible array of musical acts played as part of the Free Outdoor Theatre Concert Series presented by Coors Light. The diverse line-up included Coffey Anderson (6/8), Queen Nation: A Tribute to the Music of Queen (6/9), Sheila E. (6/10), Kalimba: The Spirit of Earth, Wind & Fire (6/11) and Mi Banda el Mexicano de Casimiro Zamudio (6/12).

Fairgoers also enjoyed thrilling carnival rides provided by Butler Amusements, which had 34 rides in total. Favorites were the stomach-turning Starship 3000 and Turbo rides, then of course the classic Fair-favorite Ferris wheel – and for the kids it was definitely the Rockin Tug and Dizzy Dragons rides. The Sunshine Lane Family Area was packed with Fairgoers enjoying everything from the Pony Rides to the Petting Zoo, plus the new Pee Wee Stampede presented by Valley Children's Healthcare, Joseph Farms and Save Mart. At this free attraction, kids ages 3 to 6 years old could be signed up to participate in this hands-on rodeo that featured music, stick horses and bulls, cowboy gear, trophies and ribbons! This was definitely a Fair favorite!

Also, new in 2022, the Merced County Fair partnered with Valley Children's Healthcare, the Merced County Library and First 5 Merced County to form the Early Childhood Literacy Partnership whose mission is to empower children to read, as well as foster a love for reading. As an exciting kickoff, the Merced County Fair hosted the Library Bookmobile on Friday, June 10 through Sunday, June 12 and offered free books to young Fairgoers, who could also sign up for the [Dolly Parton Imagination Library](#), as well as get their very own [Merced County Library](#) card. This first year partnership was a great success with more than 1,000 families connecting with the library at the Fair, more than 700 books were handed out and 50 new families signed up for library cards – all helping to encourage more reading this summer!

Food was most definitely a big topic at the Fair which featured four new vendors – Hot Doggin' Inc. with their bacon-wrapped gourmet hot dogs, Maddy Moo's with their popular rainbow grilled cheese, Dole Whip with their refreshing sweet treats and Country Fair Cinnamon Rolls that featured a maple bacon bomb cinnamon roll! Plus, there was a long list of returning Fair food favorites that were enjoyed by many as they got to experience the Fair in-person again.

As always, livestock was a big draw at the Fair and the return to a full, in-person Fair definitely had a big impact on livestock numbers! The Small Animal Auction on Friday, June 10 at 6:30 p.m. in the Hilmar Cheese Barn saw the



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sale of 129 animals generating \$37,535 in sales. Then that same day in the Les McCabe Arena, the Dairy Replacement Heifer Sale generated \$232,525 from 51 heifers sold. On Saturday, June 11, the Jr. Livestock Auction, presented by American AgCredit, held in the Hilmar Cheese Barn was a record-breaking success generating \$1,155,155 in sales by 4-H, FFA and Independent Exhibitors – far surpassing the sales totals from 2021 which were \$860,777, an incredible 34% increase. A total of 550 goats, pigs, lambs and beef were sold this year. The community rallied around Chloe Herrera whose mother passed away during the Fair; she recorded \$79,468 for her pig with the sale and add-on bids! Additionally, an anonymous donor stepped forward and paid her commission, so 100% of the purchase price will go to Chloe! The Merced County Fair Board of Directors served 650 dinners for the Jr. Livestock Auction buyers and their families in the Central Valley Concrete & Central Valley Trucking picnic area to show the Fair's appreciation for the buyers' continued support of the Fair's livestock program and the hardworking 4-H, FFA and Independent exhibitors.

The Merced County Fair would like to recognize these top buyers and awards from 2022:

- Dairy Heifer Replacement Sale 2022 Buyer of the Year - Red Rock Dairy, Rocky DeJager
- Rabbit Auction 2022 Buyer of the Year - Doug & Sharon Gallaway
- Junior Livestock Auction 2022 Buyer of the Year - Thomas C. Williams, Inc., Noah & Lorena Williams
- 2022 Outstanding Service Award - Martin Machado

Not only were the sales a source of big excitement, so was the showmanship competition! The outstanding livestock exhibitors listed below are truly the best of the best! Both Sami Col, Lancers 4-H and Madysen Dietz, Bear Creek 4-H tied for Master Showmanship Sami Col ending up winning 1st place over Madysen by just a few points based upon tie-breaker scoring. Congratulations to these outstanding young ladies and all of our amazing exhibitors.

4-H Senior Large Animal

- Courtney Fernandez, Dos Palos 4-H (Beef)
- Anika Borges, Independent (Boer Goat)
- Jax Souza, Hilmar Colony 4-H (Dairy Cattle)
- Cooper Johnston, Lancers 4-H (Dairy Goat)
- Madysen Dietz, Bear Creek 4-H (Sheep)
- Sami Col, Lancers 4-H (Swine)
- Carlee Maciel, El Nido 4-H (Horse)

FFA Advanced Large Animal

- Kaitlin Does, Gustine FFA (Beef)
- Falyann Gragnanni, Golden Valley FFA (Boer Goat)
- Avery Oliveira Hilmar FFA (Dairy Cattle)
- Derek Oliveira, Hilmar FFA (Dairy Goat)
- McKenzie Jacobo, Dos Palos FFA (Sheep)
- Jenna Freitas, Buhach Colony FFA (Swine)
- Alison Heupel, Golden Valley FFA (Horse)

4-H Senior – Small Animal

- Stephanie Verduzco, Los Banos Community 4-H (Rabbit)
- Rylin Gamble, Merced River 4-H (Poultry)



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FFA Advanced – Small Animal

- Amethyst Lumley, Golden Valley FFA (Rabbit)
- Reena Grewal, Livingston FFA (Poultry)

As the Fair returned after a two-year hiatus, competitive exhibits were down slightly with a total of 4,535 entries that were displayed in four competitive exhibit areas - Jr. Ag Mechanics, Agriculture & Horticulture, Floriculture and the Emanuel Medical Center Merced Arts Pavilion (Kids', Fine and Home Arts) – showcasing the incredible talents of Merced County. This does not include the 1,700 animals entered into the Livestock competitions.

"We are proud of the return of our Fair – providing a perfect reunion for our community after more than two years apart to kick-off the summer with a safe, affordable and family-friendly event!" said Burrola. "We want to thank everyone who came out to enjoy the Fair, as well as the wide array of people who played a role in bringing the 2022 Merced County Fair back for the community. We look forward to seeing everyone again next year!"

The 2023 Merced County Fair will run June 7-11. Be sure to sign up for the Merced County Fair's free email newsletter to stay up-to-date on information or connect with the Fair on Facebook, Twitter, Instagram and TikTok.

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.*" Roughly 70,000 people from throughout Merced County and beyond attend the five-day Merced County Fair each June. Members of the Board of Directors include: President, Kim Rogina; First Vice President, Vicky Banaga; Second Vice President, Luis Lara; Mark Erreca; Lori Gallo; Emily Haden; Mark N. Pazin; and Carol Sartori-Silva. Teresa Burrola heads up the daily operations in her role as CEO. The 2023 Merced County Fair, which marks 132nd year of operation for the Fair, will be June 7-11. For more information about the Merced County Fair, please visit 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 TikTok ([@mercedcountyfair](https://www.tiktok.com/@mercedcountyfair)).