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Fun abounds at annual fair

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--Photos by ELAINE SANDMAN

Above, the little red hen seems to be saying, "faster, faster," from her perch on the handle bars of this Boundary County youngster's bike as they rode down the street during the Boundary County Fair barnyard parade on Aug. 18.

**By ELAINE SANDMAN**  
**Staff writer**

The Boundary County Fair celebrates the community's ties to one another and its traditional support for kids and agriculture. "Life tends to be so busy that a once-a-year, five-day celebration helps keep Boundary County close together," Commissioner Walt Kirby said.

The fair, held last week in Bonners Ferry, showcases the achievements and skills of young and old in exhibits, contests, events and the bread and butter of work-a-day life in the agricultural world.

"To stay a community event with community activities, it has to stay a free fair," said Don Alexander, who recently retired after 15 years as a fair board member. "Many people from outside the area have asked me, 'Where do we pay to get in?' It's great fun for me to surprise them by saying, there is no charge for the fair," fair board member Gene Andrews said. For 4-H and FFA members and others, the fair is the culmination of a year or more of learning and responsibility. "The more work you put into your project or animal, the better the reward," 4-H member Patrick Lepoidevin said. "Our boys learned a lot this year about responsibility," added Patrick's mother, Barb Lepoidevin.

"I've worked on the fair board for a number of years now," Andrews said. "I've seen youth learn responsibility to themselves, their parents and their animals. They learn that the very lives of their animals depend on them. They are held accountable to keeping their areas properly maintained while at the fair. They are expected to help their co-exhibitors and others while preparing for the fair and, while the fair is going on, everyone depends on each other to make it work." "There were some real toe-curling moments sometimes but it gets done," added Sharon Schnuerle, one of many who wore many hats at the fair.

Chester White, whose son, Matt, won grand champion in quality and showmanship beef, said lessons learned are invaluable. "Both of my children learned that a good foundation of hard work will pay off and distant goals are attainable," Chester White said. "With hard work and help from friends I learned a lot that will be useful in the future," Matt White added.

The rewards of entering something at the fair aren't just the intangible. There is recognition with ribbons and money, too. Getting the awards in front of the community, friends and family means a lot, said entrants. "Fun, the fair is fun," Andrews said. "As I walked the fairgrounds, everywhere I went I saw people interacting with others, having great conversations, enjoying games, great food. The fair is a social time." "Support to the Fair is giving back to the community as the community has given to me," Chuck Quillin, owner of 3-Mile Cafe and Truck Stop, said.

There were more than 100 volunteers at this year's fair. "There are thousands of hours, dollars and materials that are donated to make this year's fair possible," Andrews said. The county doesn't charge extra to use of the facility and helps with funding for improvements. There also was massive support from the business community, which donated materials and equipment to the fairgrounds so it would be ready, fair board officials said.

"On an annual basis there is over \$10,000 donated," Andrews said. Businesses also made a huge impact for the future of the kids involved in the fair when they stepped to the plate at the market animal sale. Many animals were bought then given back so they could be auctioned again and or they were donated to places like the Senior Center, The Restorium and others. This year, the amount totaled between \$200,000 to \$300,000.

About 10 percent of the county's resident exhibited something in this year's fair, officials said. Estimated attendance was between 60 to 70 percent of the population. "I noticed and heard many people comment about the numerous out-of-county vehicles and I talked with a lot of people who traveled distances to attend," Andrews said.

When Anthony Dunham was asked during his royalty interview about the meaning of the fair... "I can't think of summer without the fair," he said.