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Levy County Fair opens



Shaun Olsen of Regional General Hospital of Williston puts a banner up over the table for RGH in the Creative Arts tent just before the start of the fair.

Story, Photos and Video

By Jeff M. Hardison © March 31, 2017 at 8:47 p.m.

WILLISTON -- The annual Levy County Fair, which restarted in 2006, opened Thursday (March 30) and continues through Sunday night.

This year's fair includes a free racing pigs event, fast and thrilling rides, as well as calmer rides for young children, food vendors, entertainers, pageants, karaoke competition, livestock shows, exhibits galore and prices that are the best on the planet for this much fun.

VIDEO CAN BE SEEN FROM THE LINK ON THE MARCH PAGE.

In this video, the ribbon is cut to open the fair.



County Commissioner Matt Brooks and Bowen Brooks wait in the audience before being called to the stage.

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Officials from the county, cities and the Fair Association take to the stage to welcome everyone to the 2017 Levy County Fair.



Inglis Mayor Drinda Merritt expresses her thanks to the Fair Association. Also standing on the stage (from the left) are Supervisor of Elections Tammy Jones, Levy County 4-H Agent Genevieve Mendoza, Bowen Brooks (being held) County Commissioner Matt Brooks and Fair President Amanda Henderson.

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Matt Brooks welcomes people to the fair. To his left is Bronson Vice Mayor Beatrice Roberts.

While the weather was relatively too warm when the gates opened at 4 p.m., especially in some of the tents, on Thursday, after the sun went down, even those areas had pleasant spring-like temperatures.

Keeping hydrated is important while at the fair, and the Williston Jr. Reserve Officer Training Corps had a tent-stand with water selling for \$1 a bottle and Gatorade selling for \$2 a bottle. These are the best and cheapest drinks at the event. However, there are so many other forms of fair food and drinks that the best way to find that aspect is to go.

There is even an old-fashioned soft drink vendor at the fair.

Levy County Fair Association President Amanda Henderson welcomed everyone to the 2017 Levy County Fair.

The Color Guard of Williston High School's unit of the United States Army Jr. Reserve Officer Training Corps brought in the colors. Carrying the American flag was Bryan Tindale. Carrying the Florida flag was Tristan Hayes. The WHS AJROTC students were under the guidance of teacher-advisor Army Sgt. (ret.) Frank Velez.

Before the official ribbon-cutting to open the fair, President Henderson said the fair was off to a good start, and that she was excited and prepared.

Chelsea Parker sang her rendition of The Star-Spangled Banner with no musical accompaniment. With the helicopter taking off and landing in the background, that sound added a special effect like being in a Mobile Army Surgery Hospital zone.

There are helicopter rides available again this year.

President Henderson spoke about the other members of the 2016-2017 Levy County Fair officers and board of directors, who like their predecessors, are all volunteers that are not paid. They spend countless hours throughout the year preparing for the fair, working all 12 months.

President Henderson introduced the fair leaders who were on stage for the opening

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with her. They were Fair Senior Vice President Thomas Wolfe; Vice President Gail Havard; Secretary Debra Jones; Treasurer Danielle Wolfe; and County Commissioner Matt Brooks, ex officio for the County Commission; and Levy County 4-H Agent Genevieve Mendoza, ex officio for UF IFAS.

4-H Agent Mendoza leads the 4-H program in Levy County, replacing Albert Fuller for that job. Levy County Extension Director Ed Jennings accepted that aspect of Fuller's job after Fuller, a longtime director and 4-H agent retired.

Other members of the 2016-2017 Levy County Fair Board of Directors are Caela Cuomo, Sam Cuomo, Tony Steele, Shawn Henderson, Jodie Chaffee, Eric Chaffee, James "Butch" Batts, Bob Uhlar; Laurie Wolfe and Terrie Breeden.

Elected officials who were present for the opening and took the stage were Levy County Commissioner Matt Brooks, Levy County Commissioner Mike Joyner, Levy County Supervisor of Elections Tammy Jones, Bronson Vice Mayor Beatrice Roberts, and Inglis Mayor Drinda Merritt.

County and city leaders shared some thoughts at the start of the fair.

Levy County Commissioner Mike Joyner was the first elected official to welcome everyone to the Levy County Fair. Commissioner Joyner also gave the opening prayer for the VIP meal immediately after the opening ceremonies.

Joyner said the people of Levy County can take pride in the county fair, thanks to the many volunteers who make it work so well with so few resources. He expressed his gratitude to the volunteers at the fair.

Bronson Vice Mayor Beatrice Roberts greeted everyone next.

"First of all," Roberts said, "I want to give thanks to God for allowing us to be here."

Then she expressed her thanks to the Levy County Fair Association for its successful efforts again this year. Roberts said that many members of her family come to the county fair each year.

Levy County Supervisor of Elections Tammy Joins thanked the fair association for allowing her to be at the fair to register voters and help answer questions or update voter rolls. Jones and her staff were present Thursday, and planned to be there Friday and Saturday to help Levy County voters.

Inglis Mayor Drinda Merritt said she is grateful for the invitation to be at the Levy County Fair. She said she hopes everyone has a good time at the fair.

Levy County Commissioner Matt Brooks said he is thankful to the association members and volunteers who put in many, many hours to make the fair succeed again.

Brooks mentioned that he knows that as soon as one year's fair end, the process begins for the next year. It is a year-round project for the volunteers, he said. The commissioner brought Bowen Brooks, his youngest child.

The commissioner also thanked the City of Williston for allowing the fair to be on the Williston Municipal Airport property.

The 2017 Levy County Fair officially opened after 2016 Miss Levy County Fair Kami McCormick cut the ribbon.