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VOLUNTEERS MAKE FAYETTE COUNTY FAIR POSSIBLE

Uniontown, PA – Since its humble beginnings, the Fayette County Fair has been made possible by the hundreds of volunteers who selflessly dedicate their time and energy to the cause.

Many of those volunteers, according to Fayette County Fair Board Treasurer John Blaney, grew up as active participants in the county's 4-H programs and now want to give back.

"My entire family went through 4-H and we believe in giving back to the community," Blaney said. "I also believe in the fair, and I believe in agriculture."

After graduating from Penn State and working for its Agricultural Extension for several years, Blaney realized he wanted to become a lifelong fair volunteer.

"The fair always meant a lot to me. It's actually where I met my wife, Hazel, when we were in 4-H together," he said.

Now a volunteer board member for about 25 years, Blaney said he's still on a mission to educate the public about "where their food comes from."

"Agriculture is very important in the world as a whole," he said. "You have to eat and a lot of people don't quite understand the process, I think."

Blaney said his children and grandchildren are among the more than 300 volunteers who will help out at this year's fair, which runs July 26 through Aug. 4 at the Fayette County Fairgrounds, 132 Pechin Rd., Dunbar.

He hopes future generations will share his family's passion for community service.

"I'm not going to do this forever. I might think I am, but I'm not," he said. "I see it all the time where kids get out of the 4-H program, go to college, come home and start a family."



“A lot of them don’t come back and volunteer until they’ve got a little more age on them because they don’t have the time, but you have to make the time. That’s what we want to instill in the next generation.”

As a former Fayette County Fair Queen, Raelynn Regula, now in her 30s, is one of the fair committee’s youngest members. After growing up in 4-H, she returned to volunteer at the fair almost a decade ago.

“I oversee the fair catalog, so everything that’s entered into the fair before it starts,” Regula said. “During the fair, I’m usually in the office, answering questions, handling problems and just performing daily fair tasks as much as possible.”

Regula said she’s one of many volunteers for which the fair has “just become something that you do, something fitting.”

“Volunteering has allowed me to continue the whole tradition of the Fayette County Fair and the agriculture I was raised on,” she said. “We know not many people come for the agriculture; it’s those other events that draw people in.

“It’s our job to promote the agriculture to fairgoers once they get there.”

Without volunteerism, Regula said, the fair would become inoperable. She said the fair board, numerous committees and parents and youth keep coming back to help because they love the fair and want it to continue.

“So many of them want to carry on the tradition their parents instilled in them and they want to pass that on to their children and grandchildren,” she said. “Our volunteers run the fair day in and day out.

“They enjoy being here; they want to be here, and that’s the type of people you want to rely on.”

Regula said as some volunteers age, retire or move away, the fair committee will always welcome the younger generations “with open arms.”

“We always need them,” she said. “The volunteers are what keeps this thing going.”

4-H Extension Educator Jennifer Deichert oversees about 100 4-H volunteers who work in the fair refreshment stands; organize fair events, such as the fashion review, livestock and dog shows; and help keep the 4-H youth on schedule.

“When you look at our 4-H volunteers, some of them are third generation,” Deichert said. “That in itself just proves that 4-H and the fair are sustainable programs and important to Fayette County.”

Deichert said, while she provides support, her volunteers “do just about everything else.”



“My volunteers are so, so valuable,” she said. “They all seem to just kind of pitch in together on things.

“It would be very costly to pay staff to do what the volunteers do, and I really don’t think it would be feasible.”

Deichert said helping at the fair lets volunteers see the impact they have on the youth, who are the county’s future leaders and workforce.

“To instill that sense of volunteerism and community service, it’s fun seeing the end result,” she said. “It’s also an enjoyable way to share your talents.”

Blaney said he wishes the fair board could repay their volunteers in some way because, without them, “a lot of what we do would go away.”

“It takes the volunteers to get it done,” he said. “We probably don’t give them all the recognition we should, but they are very, very important.

“Without them, this fair wouldn’t be what it is today.”

For more information on all the Fayette County Fair has to offer, visit www.fayettefair.com.

To learn more about Fayette County, visit www.fayettecountypa.info.

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