

Historic Orangeville Fair set to celebrate 163rd year



By Mike Pickford

One of Ontario's longest-running annual events will be returning to Orangeville for a 163rd time this Labour Day weekend. With a history dating from a decade before Orangeville's incorporation as a village in 1864, the Orangeville Fair has entertained thousands upon thousands of Canadians from far and wide over the years. Next month they're looking to do it all again as they welcome people to the Orangeville Fairgrounds and Event Centre north of town for a jam-packed weekend of family fun. Hosted by the Orangeville Agricultural Society (OAS), the annual extravaganza has a rich history of both entertaining and engaging attendees. As well as popular events such as the tractor pull and demolition derby, the fair this year will once again feature numerous educational activities designed to teach people about the importance of agriculture to everyday life.

"The general idea of the fair is that it represents the agricultural community in this area. It's important to us that we show the people of this community, and indeed beyond this community, just how agriculture works," said Orangeville Agricultural Society member Peter King. "We're not too far away from the big urban centres here, but Orangeville has been able to retain its identity as an agricultural hub in Ontario. There's still a big ag presence here in the community."

Having attracted over 5,000 people to last year's Fair, the organizing committee is praying for good weather on Sept. 1, 2 and 3 in the hopes of drawing an even larger crowd this time around. While a full schedule of events has yet to be released, Mr. King promised there would be something for everyone over the course of the weekend.

"Whenever you think Orangeville Fair your mind immediately wanders to the demo derby and the demo crass, the truck and tractor pulls and, of course, the midway. But there's so much more than that going on," Mr. King said. "We probably have 40 different events going on. We have pet shows; we've got a kids tractor pull where they have to pedal as fast as they can to move - that's a really great event."

He added, "We have arts and crafts, livestock shows and lots of different vendors in, both selling items and educating people about a variety of different agricultural-related things. Rest assured, if you come out you'll find something to do."

After a hugely successful debut last time out, Mr. King was excited to the return of the garden tractor races. He said, "That was a really big thing for us last year. We absolutely had to bring it back, people were really excited to watch the races. Hopefully that excitement will carry over again and we can get a big crowd out to watch."

Tickets are being sold in multiple ways. Mr. King notes there are single admission, multi-day passes, full weekend passes and family passes available for purchase. For more information regarding tickets, contact the Orangeville Agricultural Society office at 519-942-9597.

Having watched the fair evolve over the past two decades, back from its days at the old fairgrounds where Walmart and Canadian Tire now stand, Mr. King says one thing will always stay the same - the OAS' commitment to agricultural education.

"We feel like it's important that people learn about agriculture, know exactly what it is that farmers do, know where your food comes from and how it's grown. For that reason, we've started going into local schools to educate our children. This fair is a way for us to extend beyond that and communicate with people of all ages and backgrounds," Mr. King said. "This is a family event, one of the best family events we have. We just want to make sure everyone enjoys themselves and has the opportunity to learn something they didn't know before."

He concluded, "It's an event that has lasted countless generations and outdates even the country we all call home today. We hope to

see you out over the long weekend to see what the Orangeville Agricultural Society is all about.?