

At least four generations of our family have been involved as competitors, volunteers, and financial supporters of county fairs. The first (that we know of) was at the Muddy Creek Fair located west of Haines in 1926 when Governor Pierce addressed his constituents and my husband's grandfather exhibited his prize Jersey calf. Family members (including our children who are now grown) later competed in sewing, showed rabbits, lambs, steers, horses, and hogs. There were smiles, tears, water fights, shaky knees, crisp white shirts, upset tummies from carnival rides, and pie-eating-contest winners.

County fairs are so much more than striving to win a prize--they are a time to celebrate our agricultural heritage and to come together with family, friends, and community members. County fairs are a place which fosters the growth of youth in valuable programs like 4-H and FFA. These programs offer another choice for kids to have a sense of belonging and a place away from video games and cell phones while learning new life skills and making friends. Alternatives to gangs and combatants against loneliness, depression, and childhood obesity. They foster leadership, volunteerism, public speaking, entrepreneurship, the importance of paying attention to detail, what it takes to succeed--and yes, how to regroup after falling short of ones goals.

County fairs help soften the rural/urban divide. They boost local economies and small businesses, help fill motels and RV Parks, and create opportunities for vendors. Hundreds of thousands of dollars are raised at 4-H and FFA livestock auctions which help pay college tuitions and teach real world business prowess.

County fairs are part of the fabric of our state and our communities. I, along with my family, fully support HB 3173 and increased funding for county fairs!