

Judges Select Somerset Fair Queen As State Fair Queen

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panying family, the queen contestants leave their tables in the large ballroom to go to prepare to be introduced to entire audience, one-by-one.

All 44 contestants then took the stage as they were introduced, and were seated on risers on the stage.

After the entire group was presented, five finalists were named.

In addition to Irwin and Sechler, the other three finalists were Dana Anderson, 16, daughter of Robert and Carolyn Anderson of Kersey; Trisha Gallagher, 19, daughter of William and Janet Gallagher of Uniontown; and Gretchen Foust, 20, daughter of Bud and Sherry Foust of Sugar Grove.

All contestants, but the five finalists, remained on stage. The finalists were sent backstage, out of earshot.

One-by-one, they returned to the stage where Principe asked them each the same question, as a final test of their ability at impromptu speaking.

The question was, "If you are selected ... how would you promote and market Pennsylvania county fairs?"

State Fair Queen Sechler said she would try to appeal to the younger generation, those in 4-H and FFA, and work to get the younger generation interested in the fair.

"Without the younger generation, the tradition of county fairs would be lost," she said.

Runner-up Queen Fyock said she would promote and market the fairs as integral to community cohesion and continuance, and emphasize the importance of the agricultural industry to the community and nation, and how fairs teach the community about agriculture.

She indicated she would also emphasize the family orientation of the fairs.

After hearing all five give their answers, the three judges then left the room to convene in private and select the winner and runner-up.

While they were away, outgoing state fair queen Amanda DeSio, of McKean County, talked about her year serving as state fair queen.

DeSio said that, at first, she never set out with the goal of becoming the state fair queen.

She said she became interested in becoming a fair queen after competing in a 1997 high school contest and became Miss Kane High, and attended county fairs and parades and county events.

That led her to pursue the county fair queen contest, which she also won.

As a 1998 contestant representing McKean Fair, she said that, on the way to Hershey for the state contest, she didn't expect to win, having seen some of the competition while visiting other fairs.

When she arrived at Hershey and met all of her competition, she said she really didn't think she had a chance.

She said she was happy and contented when she was named Miss Congeniality of the 1998 pageant.

Then she was selected as one of the five finalists.

She said she still was completely surprised to hear her named called as the new state fair queen, because she was busy trying to figure out who among the other finalists was to be chosen.

The year, she said, began with tears flowing and cameras flashing, and it went fast.

She soon met with state legislators, attended different events in crown and sash, appeared during Penn State's Ag Progress Days, the Butler Fair, helped judge the queen contest at the Warren County Fair, and had fun promoting fairs at the Clarion County Fair. At the Indiana County Fair she walked around on stilts on the grounds to help promote the event.

At her home fair, the McKean County Fair, she had the chance to crown the new fair queen, and she met a lot of people who supported her.

She especially thanked the McKean County Fair Board for being supportive and providing help in preparing her for the role, as well "as giving me a fair of which to be proud."

Her younger sister Ally, 10, accompanied her on some of the trips and that was fun, she said.

She especially gave thanks for the support of Sarah Long, wife and co-chairman with husband Frank Long of the Fair Queen Committee. Frank is outgoing PSACF president.

According to DeSio, she developed a special relationship with Sarah, upon whom she relied as an advisor, helper and organizer.

Additionally, she had said that, as state fair queen, she recently got to go to her first Farm Show and saw her first rodeo, both memorable.

DeSio also said she tried to look upon being state fair queen as an opportunity to, "... have fun and try to take the most out of each experience."

Other members of the state Fair Queen Committee were Ken Adams of Harford Fair, Luke Bruckhart of the Manheim Community Farm Show, and Thomas Mikesell of the Indiana County Fair.

Outstanding Fairperson

In addition to a new fair queen, every year the PSACF recognizes lifetime outstanding efforts in support of Pennsylvania fairs through its outstanding fairperson of the year award.

This year, Thomas Mikesell was the award recipient.

Mikesell has been involved with the Indiana County Fair for many years, serving on the board since 1964, when he was first appointed, after serving as superintendent.

A former member of the Pennsylvania State Grange, Mikesell said he dairy farmed until 1972, when he went from milking cows and part-time selling seeds for Hoffman Seed Company in Landisville, to working full-time for Hoffman Seed Company as district sales manager. Later he was promoted to regional manager, where he continued until he retired in 1989.

Up until the Mikesells sold their dairy cows, Thomas said he didn't have the time to volunteer as much to the Indiana County Fair, or attend the state fair conventions every year. Since 1972, however, he said he was able to spend more and more time helping out with the county and state fair organization.

His wife of 50 years came April, Marjorie Mikesell said, "I tell him, I didn't marry you, I married the fair."

Marjorie was an office manager for the county Extension agency for 16 years, and together they spent many hours and consecutive years helping to organize, market and promote the Indiana County Fair.

Also, after 1972, Thomas said he had time to start attending the state PSACF conventions every year.

Mikesell said winning the award came as a surprise, since he, as a member of the selection committee, didn't know he was being considered. The other members of the committee led him to believe they were all in agreement in selecting another person.

He said he knew the other person whom he thought was to be the award recipient, and was briefly confused when they said the recipient had raised sheep and dairy cattle.

The couple has two grown daughters, both of whom were involved in 4-H and exhibited dairy cattle and home economics projects at the Indiana County Fair and at the state Farm Show.

Thomas said that over the years there have been many changes in fairs — replacing old buildings, adding attractions, events, and having to learn how to use new

technology in order to maintain records and premiums.

The bigger an event gets, the more activities involved, the more need to rely on such things as computers, he said.

Attending the PSACF annual convention has been something he has always looked forward to, he said, for the chance to re-establish acquaintances, to find out what is new in the industry, and, if needed, complete the booking of entertainment and services.

The convention is held in conjunction with the Pa. Showmen's Association convention. The Pa. Showmen's Association is for those people who put on shows, not the entertainers, per se.

During the several-day convention, entertainment acts — from clowns, musical groups, to demolition derby organizers and equipment suppliers — rent rooms in the hotel or set up tables in the associated trade show, and welcome fair officials to visit, in the hope of getting jobs at fairs.

Mikesell said representing Indiana County Fair at the convention and in his involvement with the state association has always been fairly easy. "I have a fair board that really does their job," he said.

He said he has made an effort to continue to attend the convention because, "I make a lot of friends, and it's a good experience for meeting people. Working for Hoffmans gave me experience, but this helps too."

Mikesell said he might not be as popular as his daughters think, however.

The evening prior to the queen coronation luncheon the association held its annual banquet, where he received the award. There were 1,100 people attending (including the couple's two daughters), representing not only the fairs in Pennsylvania, but from surrounding states as well.

He said his daughter asked him, "Do you know all of these people?"

He said he just laughed.

Cost-Cutting Measures Can Help Farm Families

COLUMBUS, Ohio — Many farm families are experiencing financial difficulties due to low commodity prices. While fluctuation in income is nothing new for farmers, this year is a particular struggle for many, especially pork producers who face a market price for hogs that is less than what it has taken to feed the animals.

Carolyn McKinney, family resource management specialist

in the College of Human Ecology for Ohio State University Extension, says basic family budgeting recommendations might help get farm families through the lean times. Some suggestions:

- Make a list of all your fixed and variable expenses, including rent or mortgage, utilities, insurance, credit payments, food expenses, clothing, gifts, transportation, charity, personal and

other expenses. Estimate expenses where you must. You can't cut spending until you figure out where the money goes in the first place.

- Trim food expenses as much as you can. For example, plan meals two weeks or a month in advance, make a list of what you'll need, and stick to it. By shopping in advance, you'll cut your stops at the store, reducing the costly habit of impulse buying. Try planning at least some meals around less costly protein-rich foods, including eggs, beans, pasta and dairy products. You can also plan meals around store specials to take full advantage of your food dollar. Use coupons only when the item is already on your list; using coupons for "extras" doesn't help you reduce spending.

- Look carefully at your budget for gifts and charity. Can you reduce expenditures by offering services rather than money or gifts?

- Study your insurance coverage. You might be able to lower your costs by reducing coverage, increasing deductibles or changing companies.

- If you can't pay all your bills in a given month, you need to decide how to handle the situation. Whatever you decide, you must contact each of your creditors, explain the situation and how you plan to rectify it. Follow up telephone calls with a written letter confirming the agreement. Better yet, visit the office of each creditor, if possible.

Some creditors have special counselors for customers who can't pay their bills, and some utilities offer special assistance for families who qualify. Be sure to ask for assistance when you contact creditors; they are more likely to reduce payments or keep bill collectors at bay if they know you are making an honest effort to pay what you owe. Also, contact your local office of the Consumer Credit Counseling Service, which can assess your financial situation and, possibly arrange a debt management program for you to repay creditors over a longer period of time.



Centre County Dairy Princess Bill Jo Bird and Mike Fedison, high school student teacher, make homemade vanilla ice cream with the Bellefonte Area High School Preschool. Students were instructed on the importance of drinking at least three servings of milk daily.

New Weigh Of Life

SPRINGFIELD (Delaware Co.) — Looking for a program that helps you make healthy food choices resulting in permanent weight loss? "My New Weigh of Life" has been developed by nutrition specialists at Penn State University and is based on the most current research into theories of obesity, weight loss, and coping (relapse) plans. Most participants lose ½ to 2 pounds a week. This 12-week program will teach you how to cut calories, increase your activity level and improve your

nutritional status without giving up all of your favorite foods.

Classes will be held at Delaware County Cooperative Extension, 20 Paper Mill Road, Smedley Park, Springfield. Classes will be held on Wednesday mornings from 10 a.m.-noon beginning February 17. A \$65 registration fee will include a workbook of supporting materials. Light exercise is also included in the class. Preregistration is requested by February 15. For registration and questions, call (610) 690-2655.