

Fair Time's Coming: Hundreds Get Ideas For Future Fairs

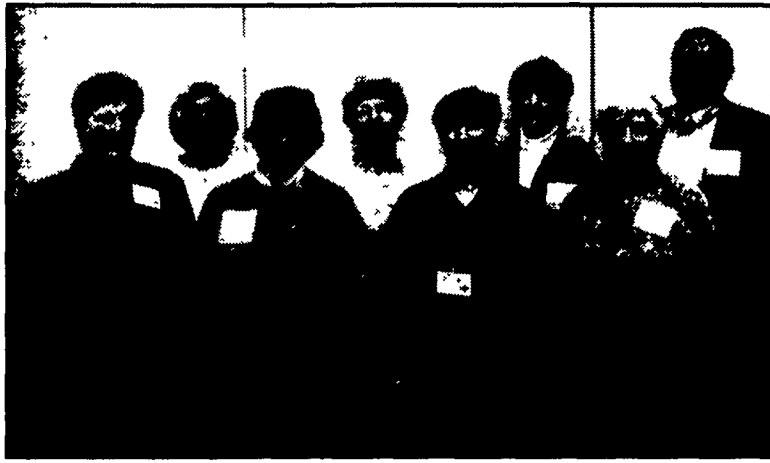
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Lancaster Farming Staff

HERSHEY (Dauphin Co.) — The Pennsylvania State Association of County Fairs and the Pennsylvania State Showmens Association combined to sponsor the 91st annual convention of fairs, an event that drew more than 1,700 people to Hershey Lodge and Convention Center, Hershey, recently.

During the conference, 19 county fair queens competed for the title of Pennsylvania State Fair Queen, with the coronation ceremony during Saturdays program.

The event also featured a trade show, talent showcase of various entertainment options for county fairs, spouses' programs, a ride safety session, educational seminars, and board meetings.

Additionally, 45-minute roundtable discussions enabled participants from various fairs to both give and receive ideas for



Presenters at the conferences Super School include, from left, front row, Annie Clark, Shirley Moyer, Rainy Linn. In the back row is Beverly Gruber, Dawn Krautter, Pat Horstman, Peggy Lipinski, and Don Fretts.

their respective fairs.

Attendees presented their ideas about how to count attendees, or handle the media. Participants also learned about animal health regulations and changes in exhibiting livestock.

During the opening celebration Frank Oliveto, Recreation Management Associates, was the keynote speaker. Oliveto discussed Motivating Your Board. Dennis Grumbine, Farm Show director, also made Farm Show presentations during the opening ceremony.

Education seminar topics included emergency disaster procedures, planning for the future of your fair, a certified food handlers course, or involving schools in the fair.

The Pennsylvania State Association of County Fairs and the Pennsylvania State Showmens organization each conducted their annual banquet during the conference.

Before the breakout sessions, Gruber, vice president of the Pennsylvania State Association of County Fairs and the competitive exhibit manager at four fairs, gave an overview of competitive exhibits.

Peggy Lipinski, associate secretary of competitive exhibits at the Schaghticoke Fair, Rensselaer County, N.Y., followed her. Both women have presented all over the nation and Canada for the International Association of Fairs and Expositions (IAFE).

"What purpose or function do competitive exhibits have?" asked Gruber. "People like to compete. It's a way to showcase their talents, and it gives fair-goers a look at the best of the best."

from the audience.

Besides changing the entry categories, Gruber suggested that in lieu of plaques or banners, fairs could give away crocks, chairs, gifts, or jackets.

Another change may be the layout of the displays. "Conceptualize new layouts without straight lines and tables, she said, keeping in mind the usual path of travel.

To get press coverage, she suggested offering newspapers features ideas and keeping handy a list of good contacts for possible interviews for interested media personnel.

"Fairs are rural razzle dazzle," said Gruber. "Believe in the concept of agricultural fairs, have a good attitude, keep current, think



Annie Clark demonstrates how to best display holiday items in a breakout session.



Shirley Moyer set up an idea for an apinary display.



Pat Horstman gave participants ideas about how to display photography and artwork.

More than 100 attendees came to an educational session geared toward fair chairpersons/superintendents.

"We've done judges' schools for the past two years," said school organizer Beverly Gruber. Consequently, this year's school offered a different slant, as fair leadership came to get ideas to take back to their own fairs.

Gruber advised building morale within the volunteer ranks by conducting picnics or a Christmas party. "They have to think of themselves as a group," she said.

To increase entries, she recommended advertising a day care, summer camps, boy or girl scouts, flower and garden clubs, retirement home, or doing in-store (such as fabric businesses) promotions.

Adding new categories, such as diabetic foods, window boxes, or having an essay contest may also give renewed interest to a fair, according to several suggestions

out of the box, and dedicate yourself to putting together the best fair that you possibly can."

Peggy Lipinski discussed education and participation ideas. Lipinski hoped to help fair leadership take their department to a new level — "make it a tool to educate and entertain your fair-goers," she said.

Competitive exhibits can also become a means for the public to be participants in your fair, she said. "If the majority of your fair-goers are not exhibitors, then we need to find a way to get the non-

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