

A Message from the WTSF President

It is hard to believe that the Tab has come out and the 82nd Annual West Tennessee Strawberry Festival is upon us! It seems like we just wrapped up the 81st, yet here we are again ready for another memorable week. In early April, the Humboldt Utilities electric department initiates the excitement with the first sight of a strawberry banner hung on a light pole. This excitement then builds as community members begin to don their strawberry shirts and place their wooden berries in their yards. Festival week truly is the best time of the year in Humboldt!

As I think back on past festivals and the rich heritage of Humboldt's treasure, it amazes me to think about how it all started. Eight men, in 1934, began a tradition that has grown bigger and better with each passing year. Could those founders have ever dreamed of what their festival would become and the longevity it would possess? It is hard to think they could have imagined what the festival would be today and that it would still be going- 82 years strong! God has blessed our town with a gift, and I am so thankful for all of the people who work tirelessly each year to make sure that the festival never disappoints. If you are like me, many of your fondest memories come from festivals of years past. I feel fortunate to have grown up in Humboldt with parents who instilled festival traditions in me from an early age. Whether it was riding on a float that my parents built, twirling a baton with Cherie's Twirlers, walking through the parade with the cheerleaders, or riding on a float as part of a royalty, I am thankful I was able to be a part of most parades in my childhood and teenage years. My husband and I, now that we have two sons, love passing on our festival traditions to them. There has not been a year yet that they were not in the parade, either riding on a float or in a bucket truck! Each of you has your own festival memories like these, and this is why we all hold this festival near and dear to our hearts.

Betty and I, along with our wonderful festival committee members and chamber staff, have been working since July to ensure that this year's festival will live up to those same standards and add even more memories in each of your hearts! Speaking of our committee members, let me just say that we have the best volunteers! There are countless people filling roles, big or small, that make the festival happen each

and every year. This thought is what led us to our theme for this year- "Reflecting the Heart of the Volunteer State." Tennessee is known for being a state full of people who were willing to serve and volunteer, and right here in our wonderful town of Humboldt, that same ideal is being carried on by each person who is involved in making the festival happen. The heart of our festival is the volunteers who give so much to make it such a huge success. So, from the bottom of my heart, THANK YOU to everyone who loves this town and this festival as much as I do and has, at any point, given of your time, talents, resources, or finances. We appreciate you!

As we prepare for our favorite week in May, you can expect to find the same events you love to attend year after year, as well as some new and updated events. We are excited to kick off the week with our prayer breakfast featuring Bert Harper and the Invitational Art Exhibition on Sunday. The former Opening Ceremonies on Monday

night is where you will find our biggest change of

the year as this event has been renamed Opening Celebration. This is going to be a fun-filled, family event that will attract people of all ages, but especially our kids! Come into the stadium beginning at 6:30 p.m., enjoy a free dinner from Tyson, McDonald's, or Sonic, and then pack as much fun in as you can until dark. A petting zoo, balloon artist, DJ, jumpers, and caricaturists are some of the activities you can look forward to at the Opening Celebration. Kids can also enjoy coloring a free strawberry

t-shirt while supplies last. Of course, be sure to stick around until dark for everyone's favorite fireworks show! We know festival week can be costly

as you hit each of your favorite food vendors (because let's face it, I have several!) and visit the carnival a few times, so this is our way of saying thank you for supporting our festival by offering you a night of FREE fun in a great family atmosphere! On

Tuesday, the carnival will open for business which is always a crowd pleaser! Is it the entertainment that you love? If so, then you are in for a treat! We welcome back one of our local favorites, Bandstand Revue, on Wednesday night; Party Planet, out of Memphis, will be here Thursday night for an awesome time; Friday night, at the BBQ Cook Off, we are bringing back Johnny Mac who got rave reviews last year! One question we always hear



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