

State Fair butter cow unveiled; 'Embracing Tradition' theme

By Peter Hancock

The final preparation for the opening of the 2021 Illinois State Fair took place Wednesday with the traditional unveiling of the butter cow.

This year's sculpture, which marks the 100th anniversary of the fair's butter cow, is entitled "Embracing Tradition." It features a dairy farmer embracing a cow. Hidden within the sculpture are 13 hearts, signifying the 13 essential nutrients found naturally in milk.

"After a year where the world stopped, I felt including an exhibitor embracing the cow signifies the joy our youth are experiencing as they return to the fair," butter cow sculptor Sarah Pratt, of Iowa, said in a news release. "You only get one chance to celebrate the 100th anniversary and I hope this year's Butter Cow will invoke those feelings of nostalgia people have experienced for generations."

Gov. JB Pritzker and First Lady MK Pritzker took part in the ceremony along with Department of

Agriculture Director Jerry Costello II, Midwest Dairy Association board member Donald Mackinson, and this year's Miss Illinois County Fair Queen Kelsi Kessler.

"What an 'udder' delight to be here," Kessler quipped before the unveiling. "With this year marking the 100th anniversary of the unofficial trademark of the Illinois State Fair, you 'butter' believe that fairgoers are excited."

The fair officially opened on Thursday. Entry gates opened at 7 a.m. Pritzker and other state and local dignitaries took part in a ribbon cutting ceremony at the main entrance at 3 p.m. That was followed by the traditional Twilight Parade, scheduled for 5:30 p.m.

Capitol News Illinois is a nonprofit, nonpartisan news service covering state government and distributed to more than 400 newspapers statewide. It is funded primarily by the Illinois Press Foundation and the Robert R. McCormick Foundation.



This year's butter cow sculpture, by artist Sarah Pratt, is entitled "Embracing Tradition." It contains 13 hidden hearts that signify the 13 essential nutrients that occur naturally in milk.

Submitted photo

Regional superintendent urges support for local control in letter to governor

Dear Governor Pritzker and Superintendent Ayala:

I write to you today to join a chorus of school officials from all parts of Illinois who ask you to rethink your recently imposed restrictions on our ongoing return to school. I want to focus not on the commonly debated topics of masks, science, and public health, but on an equally important issue that is seemingly lost here: local control and local accountability.

For decades now in Springfield, our school leadership across the state has fought one battle after another over state mandates. Our politicians at the State Capitol are often well-intentioned when they add to our daily demands over the curriculum we provide, the meals we serve, our dress codes, and much more. However, too often, they don't realize the costs that come from these more isolated decisions.

Under COVID-19, mandates have become politically polarizing – and our students are suffering because of it.

Instead of being able to focus on the safe return to in-person schooling that we all are excited for right now, our local school superintendents and their volunteer school boards are going to war over the mask mandate. They have been pitted against their local communities. Districts are divided after heated pub-

lic debates, with 5-2 and 4-3 votes on the requirement seemingly every night. No one is happy with the outcome, and these hard feelings will linger and assuredly affect our quality of education for some time to come.

Why? I can appreciate you firmly believe a mask mandate is the safest way for school to resume. Many across the state would agree with you, but many would not, and the tension is un-

bearable.

The beauty of local control in our school system is that it is equally met with strong local accountability. When our schools make decisions about changing school courses, hours, sports, and anything else, these decisions are not made from behind a desk hundreds of miles away from those impacted by the decisions. They are face to face with and held accountable by the families that they serve. If they land on the wrong side of a decision, without divisive and polarizing outside influence, they are able to carefully work together and move appropriately to resolve it.

As you have heard from many of my colleagues recently, each district is best equipped to make the decisions locally to safely and effectively educate their children – and to be accountable for those decisions. Please do not use this opportunity to "double down" on districts that do not agree with

the mandate, as you will only force many to dig in deeper and further distract us from our number one job: educating our children.

I do appreciate the many long hours and difficult decisions you have had to make throughout the pandemic. This is a historic challenge, and we have much to be proud about for how we have all stepped up to answer the challenge.

Now more than ever, our kids need to see adults in the room across the state settle their differences and put the focus back on their future. We cannot do that as long as our leaders in Springfield govern by mandate. Please reconsider giving local control and local accountability back to our districts today. I am available and glad to talk further at your earliest convenience.

Yours in Education,
Kyle Thompson

2021 Sew Happy Hearts Quilt Show /Bazaar to be held Sept. 24 and 25



Submitted photo

The 2021 Sew Happy Hearts Quilt Show/Bazaar will be held on Friday, September 24 from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. and Saturday, September 25 from 10 a.m. to 2 p.m. at 641 W 6th Street, Neoga, IL. Admission is \$3. An \$800 value Sew Happy Hearts basket will be raffled at the event. Tickets are three for \$10. Sew Happy Hearts will also be raffling off a 62"x78" quilt with sleeves (pictures). Tickets are three for \$5. More information can be found at Sew Happy Hearts website or by visiting <https://sewhappyheartsneoga.wixsite.com/sewhappy>.

27th Annual Atwood Apple Dumpling Festival Downtown Atwood

Friday August 20, 2021

3:00-8:00 p.m.
5:00-8:00 p.m.
5:00 p.m.
5:10 p.m.
5:30 p.m.
5:30-7:00 p.m.
6:00 p.m.
7:00-7:30p.m.
7:00-9:00 p.m.

Craft/Food Vendors/Inflatables Open
Friday Night Family Bash (North Main Street)
Official Welcome by Village President Bill Fleming (Main Stage)
Star Spangled Banner sung by Mike Drake
Bike Rodeo Registration (United Church of Atwood Parking Lot)
"Gunny Sack" (Bluegrass) (Main Stage)
Bike Rodeo Judging (United Church of Atwood Parking Lot)
Apple Dessert Auction (Main Stage)
"Battle Creek (Country) (Main Stage)

Saturday, August 21, 2021

6:00-7:15 a.m.
6:30-9:00 a.m.
7:30 a.m.
8:30 a.m.-12:30 p.m.
9:00 a.m.-8:00 p.m.
9:00 a.m.
9:00 a.m. - 9:50 a.m.
10:00 a.m.
10:00 a.m.-11:00 a.m.
10:00 a.m.-1:00 p.m.
11:00 a.m.
11:30 a.m.
11:30 a.m.-12:30p.m.
1:00 p.m.
2:00 p.m.
3:00 p.m.
3:00 p.m.
4:00-5:00 p.m.
5:30-7:00 p.m.
7:00 p.m.
8:00 p.m.-11:30 p.m.

Shalynn's Shuffle 5K Run/Walk Registration (Atwood-Hammond Grade School)
United Church of Atwood Apple Dumpling Breakfast (at United Church of Atwood)
Shalynn's Shuffle 5K Run/Walk Begins
Frank Bragg Memorial Antique Tractor Show (on Main by United Church of Atwood)
Craft/Food Vendors Inflatables Open
5K awards presentation (Main Stage)
Baby Pageant Registration (Beside Main Stage)
Apple Dumpling Baby Pageant (Main Stage)
Kiddie Tractor Pull Registration (in front of United Church of Atwood)
Community Blood Services of Illinois Bloodmobile (108 S. Main Street)
Kiddie Tractor Pull Begins
Rajah Park Dedication
Prairieland Pickers (Main Stage)
"Keenager Kitchen Band" (Main Stage)
"American Heritage" Apple Dumpling Parade
Andrew's Family Magic Show (Main Stage)
Bags Tournament (Back parking lot at Michael's Tavern)
Coles County Barbershop (Main Stage)
Mackville (Main Stage)
"50/50 Raffle" drawing & Miscellaneous drawings (Main Stage)
"Eldorado" (Beer Garden-Municipal Building.)

For more information call
Stephanie Wierman 620-7460 or
Doris Elmore 259-1256

Visit Downtown Mattoon Dine in Restaurants

Bimini Café - Little Mexico – Thai Noodle & Sushi – Luigi's Italian

Hunan Fine Asian Cuisine – Downtown Diner – Burger King