

BEC fair keeps traditions, adds new fun

By Dan Linehan
GARDEN CITY

The Free Press
July 30, 2008

— The lumberjacks are back, a new arena is ready for its first horse performance and a popular onion-ring cook returns under a new name after a brief hiatus.

The Blue Earth County Fair is back for its 149th year, its grounds as always ringed by the towering, stately trees of the Garden City campground.

There are two new food vendors — Domino's Pizza and GLO Specialties, makers of traditional fair fare. Helicopter and mechanical bull rides also will be offered for the first time.

But perhaps the most anticipated event first made a splash in 2007.

The All American Lumberjack Show is scheduled for 12 shows, and there's more to this act than hacking at trees.

"We really didn't know what we were getting into," said Fair Board President Bob Diesch of the 'jacks' debut last year. "It is a phenomenal show."

Showmanship and entertainment are at the heart of the performances, which include log running and other competitive chainsaw events. The first show of each day is geared toward children.

Fair mainstays such as 4-H competitions, the tractor pull and grandstand acts are, of course, returning.

There is hope for some llamas to join in the sheep competition. Shepherds sometimes use llamas to tend their flocks. Dog and cat lovers get their own competitions Sunday.

The new horse arena was actually built in time for last year's fair, but couldn't be used because of poor weather. More than a dozen horses are expected for the show.

The tractors in this pull, sanctioned by the national organization in charge of this sort of thing, can leave your daddy's tractor in the dust.

"They come to hear the screaming engines and watch the turbos make noise," Diesch said of the souped-up machines that will compete.

On the lighter side, a compact car race Sunday afternoon should be good for some laughs.

"What happens, invariably, is someone will go into the corner too fast and they'll flip it on its side," Diesch said of the little cars, which are then flipped right side up.

AJ's Onion Rings will continue serving the popular food offered for years under the name Norm's.

There will not be a carnival or its accompanying rides and food, for the second year in a row. They just couldn't find one, Board Member LeAnn Schwarz said. For her, the fair is all about experiencing rural values such as gardening and agriculture. The 4-H mom has one good reason for why the fair is in Garden City and not Mankato: "It gets the city people out to the country."

If You Go

What

Blue Earth County Fair

When

Thursday through Sunday

Where

Garden City Campgrounds

Admission

\$3 for a day, \$9 for a season pass

Fair highlights

Thursday

7 p.m. — Tractor pull (grandstand)

8 p.m. — Battle of the bands (beer garden)

Friday

10 a.m. — Senior citizens event (lunch at 11:30 a.m.)

8:30 p.m. — Murphy Brothers Band

Saturday

Chainsaw sculptures (all day)

1 p.m. — Donut-eating contest

8:30 p.m. — 69 cents band (beer garden)

Sunday

3 p.m. — Compact car race

*For a complete schedule, visit
www.blueearthcountyfair.org*



Pigs watch as a boy hefts a power tool at the 2006 Blue Earth County Fair. This year's four-day fair, which starts Thursday, continues traditions and, maybe, starts some new ones.