



Illinois  
Association  
of  
Agricultural  
Fairs

May 2022

# TentTalk

## Everyone Glad to be Back at Convention



*Surprise, followed by tears, followed by extreme happiness was the immediate reaction by 2022 Illinois County Fair Queen Addisyn Calloni when she heard her name called as the winner.*

The 2022 IAAF convention was “Back in Business” this January at the Crowne Plaza. From the Trade and Talent shows to the Showcase and queen competition, participants were glad to be back in Springfield.

With the convention canceled last year due to Covid-19, participants seemed to appreciate getting together again.

Addisyn Calloni, 19, of Royalton was crowned Miss Illinois County Fair Queen.

Addisyn represented Perry County at the 111th Illinois Association of Agricultural Fairs Convention. She is currently attending Southern Illinois University-Carbondale as a biological sciences major and hopes to enter a Physician Assistant Program.

Calloni will be a summer employee of the Department of Agriculture. She will travel to about 30 county fairs and will be the official hostess of the Illinois State Fair in Springfield and the DuQuoin State Fair. As queen, Calloni’s main duty is to emphasize the importance of agriculture and county fairs to Illinois.

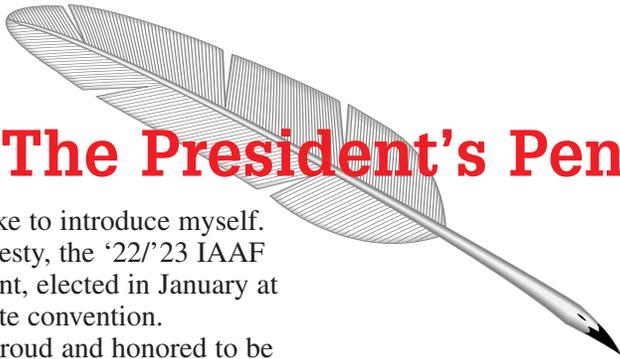
Grace Markovitz of McHenry was named the first runner up, Kaylee Phillips of Effingham was named second runner up, Rachel Williams of Warren was named third runner up, and Katie Noyd of Henry County was named fourth runner up.

“I’m excited to learn more about agriculture,” Calloni said. “There are no farmers in my family, but we’re surrounded by cornfields.”

Calloni had to pinch herself when her name was announced as the winner. “My first thought was, ‘Am I

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# The President's Pen



Hello! I'd like to introduce myself. I'm Jill Hardesty, the '22/'23 IAAF State President, elected in January at the IAAF state convention.

I'm very proud and honored to be the first woman to be president of this awesome organization. I'm a 31-year member of the Fisher Fair and have been around county fairs all my life. Growing up on a farm, I believe has given me the background to be in this industry that I love so much. Whether I was last in my Angus heifer class or winning Grand Champion Steer, the fair industry is an awesome place for any wide-eyed kid wanting to learn more about themselves or taking care of their animals each and every day! I'm a high school Secretary at Blue Ridge (Farmer City) and I'm married to Rick, who is a former Electric Superintendent in our town before he retired. We'll been married this year for 28 years and have 5 kids between us with 14 grandkids and 4 great-grandkids. WOW! Family gatherings are a blast!

We had a great convention in January and I hope you had a chance to come and learn some new ideas to take back to your fairs and to meet up with old friends and meet new ones! The fair industry has



Jill Hardesty

provided all of us an opportunity to network and learn about new ideas that will work for any size fair. It's so important to use those new ideas for your guests on your fair-

grounds. We are helping to raise the next generation of fair-goers and volunteers! Get them involved in any way you can to help carry on your fairs' success and future! Thank you to all that volunteer at your fairgrounds! You ARE making a difference in your community.

There is a new email address to contact me with: [iaafpresident@gmail.com](mailto:iaafpresident@gmail.com). Please feel free to use it Let's see what we can build for the future together!

President

## Email Updates and Save the Dates

Please update your email address with Charlyn Fargo Ware ([charfarg@aol.com](mailto:charfarg@aol.com)).

In an effort to save money, we will be emailing information about next year's convention (Jan. 20-22, 2023) rather than sending out packets. Note the 2023 convention is one of the years that it does NOT fall on Martin Luther King weekend.

We also plan on emailing information about County Fair Day (Aug. 12, 2022) rather than mailing out forms.

**SAVE THE DATE:** The 2024 convention will be Jan. 12-14, 2024 (back on Martin Luther King weekend).

### Zone Meetings:

- \* Central Zone, Oct. 30, 2022
- \* Northern Zone, Nov. 6, 2022
- \* Southern Zone, Nov. 13, 2022

### IAAF Convention

Crowne Plaza, Springfield, IL  
January 20-22, 2023

**IAFE Zone 5 Meeting**, Springfield  
Crowne Plaza, March 3-5, 2023

## Dates to Remember

- **Fair books and Entry Fee Certificate** due to IDOA 10 days before fair's start; Rehabilitation Reports due to IDOA by June 30, 2022

- **Illinois State Fair**  
August 11-21, 2022

- **County Fair Day** August 12, 2022

- **Grand Summary Report**  
due by October 15, 2022

**IAAF Dues Paid by Fairs**  
December 15, 2022

**Queen Ads to Cathy Redshaw,**  
December 15, 2022

**Queen Banquet Ticket Orders to Tom Schahrer,** December 15, 2022

## Illinois Association of Agricultural Fairs

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**[www.IllinoisCountyFairs.org](http://www.IllinoisCountyFairs.org)**

[iaafoffice@illinoiscountyfairs.org](mailto:iaafoffice@illinoiscountyfairs.org)

IAAF Office  
71 West Fairview Lane  
Springfield, IL 62711



*Friends of Illinois County Fairs who were honored at the 2022 Convention are pictured above: left to right, Ed Dame with NAME (North American Midway Entertainment) sponsor of the awards; Nathan Gentz*

*accepting for George Fewkes; Lyle lee Boone County; Marla calico, IAFE; Jim Culler, CullersFrench Fries; and Tim Norman, Illinois Department of Agriculture.*

## Friends of Illinois County Fairs Are Honored

The distinguished Friends of Illinois County Fairs award went to four worthy individuals at the 2022 IAAF convention. Award winners were acknowledged for their service to agriculture, county fairs and youth.

Fellow fair board members say there is no one more enthusiastic about the Boone County Fair than Lyle Lee. “His enthusiasm is contagious, and he inspires others to become more involved, wrote his nominator.

Lee has served as a Boone County Fair Board member for 29 years. He has served 18 years as a director and for the past 11 years as president of the Boone County Fair. Lyle began his work with the fair board as the Sponsorship Chairman, a position he continues to hold. He is responsible for securing countless volunteers as well as over \$750,000 in sponsorship funds over the years. While president, attendance at the Boone County Fair grew consistently with a record attendance in 2019. Throughout the difficulties of Covid-19, Lyle kept the focus on moving forward.

During the fair, Lyle spends his time on the grounds, checking to see what needs to be done. He’s known for his ability to pitch in and do whatever it takes to keep things running smoothly.

The Boone County Fair is owned and operated by the Granges of Boone County. Lyle has held numer-

ous positions, both locally and at the state level, within the Grange organization. He is a veteran and has served his country with honor.

George Fewkes of Albion’s love for fairs started in 1945 at the age of 10. He began showing cattle, sheep, a heritage passed on to his daughters, grandchildren and great grandchildren. His love for fairs allowed him to judge, work and enjoy fairs across many states, from small county fairs to the larger state fairs.

The Edwards County fair in Albion has always been a huge part of his life. He has served on the board over the years as treasurer, sheep superintendent and parade chairperson. His greatest pride is in helping kids at the 4-H barns, seeing and exhibiting in the Floral Hall and visiting with friends and neighbors. George has served the IAAF as Southern Zone director and President in 2013 and 2014. During that time, George and his wife, Nieta, traveled to fairs all over the state. George has also judged many county and state livestock shows and served as superintendent of the sheep and swine at the DuQuoin State Fair for many years.

In 2020, the Edwards County fair was canceled. It would have been 75 years of attending the fair every summer. When the fair opened in 2021, George was right back in the crowd bidding on desserts at the

Senior Citizens auction or saying a prayer before the livestock shows.

His grandson, Nathan Gentz, accepted the award on George’s behalf at the state convention.

“French Fries.... Come and get your French Fries.” That’s the voice of Jim Culler, owner and operator of Cullers French Fries, which has been in business for 76 years. He took over the business for his uncle, Forrest Culler, after Forrest died. Jim had worked the French fries stand since he was a teen and is a friend of Illinois County Fairs.

Founding owner Forrest Cullers loved the queens at the fairs and gave each queen a bracelet and free fries, a tradition that Jim continued. Jim and his wife, Darcie, purchased the business, supporting county fair queens, supporting 4-H by purchasing the Bake-Off cake at the Logan County Fair, giving memorial baskets and horse racing blankets in memory of Forrest for grand prizes at Logan and Champaign County fairs.

The Cullers have 3 French fries stands traveling in Illinois, Indiana, Carolinas, Ohio and Georgia. They prepare 23 tons of fresh fries every year for county fairgoers. Wash, peel, slice, soak, dry, fry. It takes 8 minutes to process a potato. No ketchup allowed; only salt and apple cider vinegar.

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# Update on Illinois Legislature Activity

by **Bridget Dougherty**  
IAAF Legislative Consultant  
Spring 2022

Hello IAAF Members! Wishing everyone a very successful and fun fair season for 2022!

The Illinois General Assembly is heading into the final weeks of its shortened spring schedule. Both chambers are scheduled to adjourn on April 8, 2022 assuming that they have finalized the Fiscal Year 2022 state budget. Normally the legislature adjourns on or around May 31 of each year after adopting a budget, but because the primary election date was moved from mid-March to June 28, 2022, they plan to adjourn early to allow members to campaign in their newly drawn districts.

**Legislation:** With only three weeks remaining in the Session, we are optimistic that we will not see any effort to revive the bills proposing to prohibit the use of travelling animals in a travelling animal show. We have been successful in fending this effort off several times in recent years and we are hopeful to conclude another spring session with no further movement on this issue. However, we are at the point in the session when amendments can still be added to bills, and new language can be heard with only a one-hour posting notice. Therefore, we will continue to monitor filed amendments on the Association's behalf.

**Budget:** The Department of Agriculture's line items pertaining to the fairs remain level from last year. While the legislature intends to adjourn on April 8, some believe that it is likely that they will have to return to Springfield after that date to finalize the budget. It is a massive undertaking every year, and every year it falls apart a few times before it is finalized. We will monitor their activities to ensure that funding for agricultural fairs remains at the Governor's proposed levels.

**Department of Agriculture Administrative Rule Changes:** We are working with the Illinois Department of Agriculture to change its administrative rules regarding the requirement that certain documents submitted to the Department by the fairs be notarized. We have an agreement with the Department to remove the currently required notarization requirement for

all documents.

Department of Commerce and Economic Opportunity Back to Business Grants: DCEO continues to release the list of grantees for the Back to Business Grants and we continue to monitor this list. The most recent update was March 17, and there are no new fairs on the list. Under this program so far, three fairs (Sangamon County, Kendall County

and Kankakee County) have received a total of \$140,000. We will continue to watch this as it finalizes. We expect that these funds will be expended within the next few months. It is possible that the General Assembly will re-fund this program in the upcoming fiscal year, as it has proven to be very popular.

Thank you and looking forward to seeing you this summer!

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## —Friends of Illinois County Fairs

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Marla Calico, IAFE President & CEO, is the epitome of someone who lives and breathes fairs. Called the "Fair Chick," she has traveled and documented fairs all over the country, as well as all the international countries that belong to the IAFE. She brings members along on her travels via Facebook Live feeds, documenting visits of interesting exhibits and conversations to county, state, national and international fairs. Marla also hosts the IAFE Podcast, "Marla by the numbers," featuring the latest fair trends.

Marla holds a bachelor's degree in agribusiness from Missouri State

University and was general manager of the Ozark Empire Fair prior to joining the IAFE professional staff as director of education and chief operating officers. She was named president and CEO of IAFE in 2016. She has also served the Springfield, Mo community as a volunteer and/or board member of numerous civic organizations. She has been recognized as an Outstanding Young Alumni from Missouri State University and one of the Springfield Business Journal's "Most Influential Women."

Her nominator wrote, "Marla is a tireless leader, an advocate for agriculture around the world and a cheerleader for fairs."

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## —2022 Convention Wrap-Up

(Continued from Page 1)

alive or am I dead right now? I feel great, but I know anyone up there would have been deserving. This has been such a great experience, even if I wouldn't have won."

Addisyn is a barista at Penny's Perks in Dowell. She enjoys golfing, baking and spending time with family and friends. She plays the ukulele and the electric guitar for her church.

The top 15 finalists were: Rachel Williams of Warren County; Lydia Lansaw of Green County, Addisyn Calloni of Perry County, Katie Noyd of Henry County, Grace Markovitz of McHenry County, Lauren Woodward of Pike County, Taylor Main of Knox County, Taylor Ferguson of Richland County, Erin Anderson of Iroquois County, Kaylee Phillips of Effingham County, Isabell Rivero of Heart of Illinois Fair in Peoria County, Jersey

Hesse of Adams County, Macey Haselton of Shelby County, Karis Hortin of Moultrie-Douglas County and Sydney Geyston of Sangamon County.

Non-finalist awards went to: Alyssa Gellarneau of Lake County, Ruby Crum Memorial Award; Briana Ulmer of Bond County, Best Personal Interview; Hannah Davis of Menard County, Best in Communication Skills; Sara DeGroot of Cass County, Best in Stage Presence; Layni Andrews of Lawrence County, Best in Beauty and Physique competition. Laney Renth of Washington County was the People's Choice Award Winner.

In addition, Jill Hardesty of Farmer City was chosen as new president of the IAAF, the first woman to be elected president. Vice president is Dave Hake of Hoyleton. New board member is Kris Lowe of Carlyle, representing the Southern Zone.

# Queen Addisyn Addresses Legislative Ag Day

Good morning. I'm Addisyn Calloni, the 2022 Miss Illinois County Fair. Currently, I attend Southern Illinois University Carbondale as a sophomore where I am majoring in biological sciences, with hopes of one day entering a physician assistant program. I am honored to be a part of the 52nd annual agricultural legislative day and to have the opportunity to represent something that unites us all at such magnitude, agriculture.

I was raised in a small rural community, but it was not until last summer that I became aware of the importance of rural land and agriculture in our state. I never knew that entering my local Perry County Fair pageant would provide me with such an insight into the inner workings of our local agriculture productions and how vital it is to Illinois.

I quickly realized this truth, as each evening of the fair came and went, I was presented with a skilled showcase and small taste of what Illinois had to offer, whether it was produce and impressive livestock proudly raised by local 4-H chapters or seeing the strength of the mighty machines that help produce our crops tested in a tractor pull.

Hosting the Perry County Fair unveiled a new appreciation within me for Illinois farmers. That week I was able to speak with some of the men and women who help play a key role in producing crops and livestock in Illinois. The hearty work done by these individuals generates more than 19 billion dollars annually, which constitutes a substantial portion of our state's economy.

Products and commodities produced by Illinois farmers are an essential part of ensuring that America can continue to be fed. The direct correlation this has with the health of our nation piques my interest, as I aspire to serve in rural medicine as my future career.

The making of farmers is not only done by passing down the occupation throughout generations of families. A passion for farming can also be cultivated when an educator plants a seed in a student's heart. After watching the youth of our local 4-H chapters display their own agricultural prod-



Queen Addisyn Calloni

ucts last summer, I could clearly see the evident need for ag-education initiatives such as FFA and other approved agricultural curricula, especially since I attended a school district that offered nothing of the sort but would have benefited from programs like these.

FFA and agricultural classes not only provide future farmers and ag-industry leaders with valuable hands-on experiences, but they also provide all Illinois students with the opportunity to learn where their meals and clothing come from, and how they can also be involved in the future of agriculture regardless of their current knowledge or status. Agriculture

related industries are responsible for 6% of Illinois employment, or in other words, almost half a million jobs. Providing students with access to agricultural education will aid in maintaining and molding our farming industry for future Illinoisans by making this knowledge more accessible.

Outside of the classroom, County Fairs are also an unbelievably valuable source of education for all who attend. I am certain that my knowledge of agriculture would be lessened significantly if it were not for my involvement in the County Fair system. I am extremely humbled to be able to represent the IAAF for the work it does that undoubtedly changes lives and broadens the perspectives of everyday people and county fairgoers, like myself.

I look forward to spending the rest of the year representing the Illinois Association of Agricultural Fairs and continuing to promote agriculture throughout our state.

I want to thank you for inviting me to join this virtual gathering to honor Illinois Agriculture, and for your continued support of Illinois County Fairs. As summer approaches, I am eager to return to the fairgrounds, and I hope to see many of you at your local county fairs, and of course at the State Fairs in Springfield and Du Quoin this August.

Thank you!

## Great Talent on Display at Show

What a talented group of young men and women who competed in the 2022 Talent Show at the IAAF convention.

Winner in the senior division went to Mitchell Galyen of Iroquois County with a piano solo; second place went to a dance theater team from Scott County made up of Macy Waters, Avery Wyatt, Kayde Rennecker, Allison Woods, Addie Gwartney, Adyson Davis, Ella Conkright, Carlen Harrison and Alysa Bareis; third place went to Nathaniel Williams of Bond County with a vocal solo; fourth place went to Mikella Cornell of Rock Island

County with a dance tap solo; and fifth place went to Quinn Perez of Jersey County with a vocal solo.

In the Junior Division Talent Show, Ella Draege of Marion County was the winner with a vocal solo; second place went to Lilliana Marachioro and Mallory Fox of Sangamon County with a dance contemporary; third place went to Autumn Braxton of McHenry County with a vocal solo; fourth place went to Macy Waters and Avery Wyatt of Calhoun County with a dance jazz duet; and fifth place went to Lily Hickox of Scott County with a dance lyrical.

# There Was Something for Everyone



Carrie McQueen, the ultimate stiltwalker, is one of the vendors at the IAAF Convention and is welcoming a group of IAAF queens.



A group of convention attendees engages in a Table Talk discussion on Sunday morning.



There are always plenty of IAAF door prizes at the Annual IAAF Convention waiting for participants to take home and the 2022 convention was not an exception.



Tom & Pam Schahrer of Forrest enjoy a moment together on a ferris wheel seat brought by the Fairbury Fair.



Vendors Miller & Mike provide quality family entertainment to schools, libraries, festivals and county fairs.



Jason Emmons with Bear Hollow Woodcarvers welcomes fairgoers to his display.

# IAFE Zone 5 March Madness Conference

by Jill Hardesty  
IAAF State President

A delegation of Illinois county fair members went to Springfield, Missouri for the 2022 IAFE Zone 5 meeting over the March 11th weekend.

Illinois County fairs represented were: DuPage, Rock Island, Peoria and Fisher Fair. It was a great weekend full of education, fun, lots of new people to meet and new adventures to the Ozark Empire fairgrounds.

Some of the table topics for the conference included: Engaging your audience, Ticketing tips and tricks, a Sustainable Solution for an Annual problem in bedding livestock and Working with Volunteers from different Generations. This conference is a yearly event that rotates between states, IL, IA, MO, KS & NE.

In 2023, the IAFE Zone 5 meeting will be held in Springfield,

Illinois and hosted by the Illinois county fairs!

We will be holding the event at

the Crowne Plaza in Springfield. Mark your calendars for the dates of March 3rd, 4th and 5th, 2023!



*Pictured are: (1 to r) Rick & Jill Hardesty, Fisher Fair, Bonnie Paganis, DuPage, Bob Radkiewicz, DuPage, Ruth O'Sullivan, DuPage, Cindy Naberhaus, DuPage, Charlie and Julie Kennell, Heart of Illinois Fair, Rebecca Clark, IL State Fair Manager, Ellen and Rick Sietmann, DuPage. Missing from the picture are: Jim & Wanda Bohnert, Rock Island and Lindsay Lindburgh, the Young Professional IAAF Scholarship winner.*

## Calico Offers Road Signs for the Future

Are you ready for the future?

That's one of the questions IAAF Keynote speaker Marla Calico asked



Marla Calico

participants of the 2022 IAAF annual convention.

"We can't look in the rear view mirror," she said. "In 2020, 90 percent of fairs canceled. In 2021, 90 percent of fairs were able to go forward.

Not only did the vast majority of fairs survive, but they also thrived. Some 62 percent of fairs reported attendance was up and 70 percent reported their carnival gross was up.

Calico, of Springfield, Mo, is the president and CEO of the International Association of Fairs and Expositions.

Her message to fairs in 2022? "Adapt change and repeat – at lightning speed. We must be flexible and agile. We're bound by traditions at fairs – nothing can change that. Covid was a food excuse to make some long needed changes."

She admits many of those putting on fairs have felt hopeless and help-

less as they navigated Covid-19. The key now is to lean into change, to be willing to do things differently.

She offered a few road signs:

1. Take bigger risks
2. Try out new ideas
3. Question each other why or why not?
4. Have a vision.
5. Remember it can be done no matter what.

"Think about making ticketing contactless, think about marketing via social media and engaging your audience and think about layout changes," she said.

She also urged fairs to think about their pricing. "We undervalue what we offer," she said.

"As you go into the fair season, accept our world has changed. Recognize those changes. Try new things. A county fair is the perfect place to bring our world back together."

# IN MEMORIAM

**Carl Eugene Becker**, 84 years old, of Altamont passed away peacefully November 29, 2021 at the Lutheran Care Center, Altamont.

Carl was born July 21, 1937, into the Christian family of George August and Dorothy Edna Meyers-Becker.

Carl was baptized in Immanuel Lutheran Church on August 8, 1937, and confirmed his faith on April 2, 1950. Carl continued to be very active in Immanuel Lutheran Church serving in numerous church offices.



Carl Eugene Becker

Carl graduated from the Altamont Community High School with the Class of 1954. Carl then attended the University of Illinois was the winner of the 1957 Inter-collegiate Livestock Judging Individual Champion and was president of the University of Illinois Livestock Judging Team.

Carl graduated from the University of Illinois in 1958. Carl was the winner of the intercollegiate livestock judge for the U of I and was also awarded the outstanding senior in the college of agriculture.

After graduating from the University of Illinois, Carl was a former science, mathematics and agricultural teacher in the Beecher City and Teutopolis School districts for a number of years. Carl always maintained

his love for agriculture, horse breeding and well known for horse racing announcing, both in the United States and other countries as Canada, Sweden, and New Zealand.

Over the years, some of his business dealings included the ownership of car washes and laundromats in Illinois and Indiana. Some of his memberships included the US Naval Reserve receiving an honorable discharge, the USTA, NRA, Lutherans for Life, Former Effingham County

Fair Association, Director, ISOBA Board of Directors, Illinois Christian Harness Horseman Association, Downstate Classic Board, ZHHA Hall of Fame Inductee, Harness Racing Hall of Fame and Museum, IHHA Hall of Fame Inductee Communicators' Corner Inductee, 4H Alumni Award Commissioned as a Kentucky Colonel.

Carl is survived by his wife, Bonnie, three sons, Jon, Kurt and Kris and daughter, Emily.

## Illinois Association of Agricultural Fairs Advocacy Fund Appeal

IAAF needs your continued financial support to help our advocacy efforts in Springfield!

Our lobbyist Bridget Dougherty has fought successfully to insure that county fairs funding was not cut and that funding was sent to fairs in a timely manner. Although the FY23 budget that the General Assembly passed recently, included funding for fairs, we are hoping it comes through. There is much work to be done to keep county fair funding going.

**Please help us fight for your fair by donating to our advocacy fund.**

Name of Fair or Organization: \_\_\_\_\_

Individual contact Name: \_\_\_\_\_

Email/Phone: \_\_\_\_\_

Amount of for IAAF Advocacy Fund Donation: \_\_\_\_\_

***Please make check payable to "IAAF" and mail to:  
71 West Fairview Lane, Springfield, IL 62711***

**THANK YOU FOR YOUR SUPPORT & GENEROSITY**

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