

OC Fair officials say this year's event set attendance records

The 128th OC Fair welcomed a record 1,470,636 guests who enjoyed 35 sold-out shows, ate hundreds of thousands of chocolate chip cookies and freed their inner farmers by greeting 11 new piglets at Centennial Farm.

"2018 was a banner year for the OC Fair in so many ways," said OC Fair & Event Center CEO Kathy Kramer. "We want to thank the community for coming out in record-breaking numbers to enjoy the best celebration of the summer. We're proud that 87% of guests surveyed said they increased their knowledge of agriculture and gave us a 4.62 overall enjoyment rating (out of 5)."

Through its community programs, the OC Fair collected 11,055 children's books, 10,769 items of clothing, 8,849 cans of food and 8,229 school supplies for local charities through the We Care Wednesday program during which guests received free admission with their donation.

The Friends of the Fair program welcomed 4,501 guests with special needs for a free VIP experience while the OC Fair Kids Club brought 1,150 children from local Title 1 programs to the Fair for a special experience that included free admission and rides, a gift card and bus service.

The final audited attendance figures show an increase of increase 10% from the 2017 number of 1,334,753. Final revenue numbers will be released in October.

"The annual Fair funds our community give-back programs, agriculture education and supports Centennial Farm and Heroes Hall, so a great year for the Fair pays dividends all year

long," said Kramer.

This year the OC Fair offered more discounts and promotions than ever before to help make the event more accessible. New in 2018 was Overalls Day and 3,140 fairgoers received free admission on Thursdays when they wore the denim classics. And a new carnival wristband deal was added to Sundays.

The most popular one-time promotion was the opening day "Free Till 3" admission and parking deal and 38,091 guests arrived early on July 13 to get the party started. Half-price early-bird weekend admission attracted 73,091 fairgoers. Some 16,610 veterans and active members of the military received free admission during the run of the fair and their family members purchased 22,647 discounted tickets.

On Thursdays, 25,158 children received free admission for Kids Day and more than 13,000 free carnival rides were provided to children who participated in the Read and Ride program.

The previous attendance record for the 23-day event was set in 2011 when 1,400,280 fairgoers turned out for the "Let's Eat" theme and watched sold-out concerts by Bob Dylan, Selena Gomez, Blake Shelton, Weezer, Chicago and more in Pacific Amphitheatre.

The 2018 OC Fair also broke the previous single-day attendance record when 86,334 fairgoers arrived on Saturday, July 28. That turnout bested the record of 84,986 guests who visited the Fair on July 21, 2001, to see the Orange Crush Demolition Derby debut, the "I Love Lucy" 50th-anniversary exhibit and to ride La Grande Wheel and the Euroslide for the first time at the OC Fair.

The OC Fair is currently the second-largest Fair in California by attendance, behind only the San Diego County Fair which runs three days longer. Nationally, the OC Fair ranks seventh by attendance.

Here are some more wrap-up numbers:

Guests

Survey – Results of the 10-day patron survey showed that 48% rated food as their favorite part of the Fair. Of those surveyed, 25% were first-time fairgoers and 48% are OC residents.

Super Pass – 15,518 guests went for the season's best deal and received free admission to all 23 days of the Fair and express entry lines along with deals on shows and concerts.

OC Fair Express – The bus service that picks up from nine different OCTA locations on Saturdays and Sundays brought 79,684 guests straight to the Fair.

Food

Cathy's Cookies – Baked 300,000 chocolate chip cookies.

Chicken Charlie's – Fried 3,000 pounds of filet mignon, went through a truckload of vegetable oil, two pallets of cookie dough and an actual truckload of chicken.

Bacon-A-Fair – Guests purchased some 400,000 pieces of bacon in all forms.

Noel's – Sold 20,834 tacos.

Ten Pound Buns – Cooked up 6,500 pounds of Ten Pound Buns.

Hot Dog on Stick – Served 17,200 hot dogs on sticks.

Entertainment

Pacific Amphitheatre – The Toyota Summer Concert Series at Pacific Amphitheatre hosted 34 shows, including four pre-Fair shows and there are seven post-Fair shows coming up. There were nine sold-out shows including Trevor Noah, Steve Martin and Martin Short, Psychedelic Furs/X/The Fixx, Earth, Wind &

Fire, Brett Eldredge, Willie Nelson and Alison Krauss, Rebelution (two concerts), Steve Miller Band and Peter Frampton and Stray Cats.

Action Sports Arena – There was a spectacle every night in Action Sports Arena, plus five matinees, totaling 28 adrenaline-pumping shows. The Daredevils & Wheels motorcycle stunt show was new this year. There were 13 sold-out events including Speedway, Broncs & Bulls rodeo, five monster truck shows and all six demolition derbies during which 45 cars and trucks and 12 motorhomes were smashed.

The Hangar – Tribute bands, classic rock bands and mariachi acts brought the fans to The Hangar where there were 12 sold-out shows in 2018: Rumours, Dead Man's Party, Firefall with Poco, Elton the Early Years, Queen Nation, Hotel California, Journey Unauthorized, Zeppelin Live, Ozomatli, I Am King, Mariachi Sol de Mexico de Jose Hernandez and Devotional/Hollywood Erasure.

Community entertainment – There were 524 community entertainers performing throughout the day on five different stages and across the fairgrounds.

Rides and games – La Grande Wheel XL was the No. 1 ride and Bank A Ball was the top game. Ray Cammack Shows reports that nearly 2.5 million fairgoers enjoyed the rides this year.

Exhibits and competitions

My Fair Selfie – OC Fair's first-ever pop-up palace of photo fun was open for 18 days and featured 11 backdrops made for photography. The limited-run exhibit was visited by 36,003 guests.

Bounty of the County – Three large-scale murals honoring local agriculture enterprises were created by artist John Cerney and installed at the main Fair entry gates.

Outstanding in their Fields – Life-size portraits of 29 people who play a role in California agriculture were placed throughout the fairgrounds and their video stories played for guests who scanned them with an app.

Heroes Hall – Open for its second OC Fair, Heroes Hall welcomed 19,375 visitors and 11,450 of them experienced the new Bravemind exhibit's VR technology. Taps was performed every evening of the Fair, five times by bugle and 18 times on the harmonica.

Competitions – There were 4,866 entries in the Garden & Floral competition. There were more than 1,300 tomatoes entered and more than 2,000 cut flower entries. At this year's Junior Livestock Auction, 312 animals were sold for a total of \$301,854.

Explorium – During the daily eating contests, 23 Fair food vendors donated food for the 1,035 contest participants. Frank Thurston performed 66 magic shows and 5,616 water balloons helped keep little fairgoers cool. There were 210 entries in the kids' art competitions.

Arts – Two tons of clay was used in Muddy's Pottery Studio during demonstrations and 1,104 hours of volunteer time were logged. In visual arts, there were 6,194 competition entries and 4,465 were in the photography category.

The OC Fair Fun Run – Celebrated its 10th anniversary with 2,923 registered runners.

The 2018 OC Fair was held July 13-Aug. 12 at OC Fair & Event Center in Costa Mesa, and offered 23 days and nights of entertainment, food, rides, shopping, exhibits and more. OC Fair & Event Center is also home to Centennial Farm and Heroes Hall – both open to the public year-round. For more information, visit ocfair.com.