

2023-24

Annual Report



Prepared by
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STEPHENSON
COUNTY **FAIR**
Freeport, Illinois





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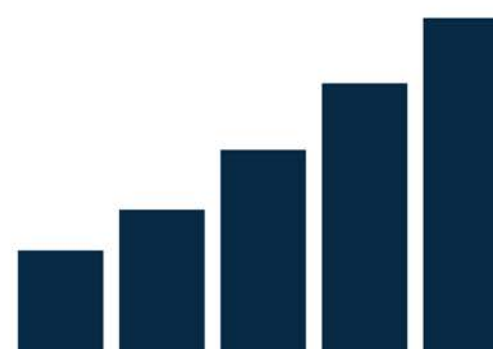
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The Fair of Our Collective Past

The Stephenson County Agricultural Society was formed in 1853, organizing the first county fair in 1854. Over the years, the fair evolved, with significant events such as hosting the Illinois State Fair in 1859 and later transitioning through multiple locations. The fairgrounds served various purposes, including as a Civil War training camp and later as the site for large-scale community events like horse races and agricultural competitions. By 1951, the current fairgrounds, Albertus Park, were purchased and established as the permanent home of the Stephenson County Fair. Key milestones included the construction of commercial buildings, dining facilities, and grandstands, with the fairgrounds enduring storms, epidemics, and flooding over the decades. Today, the fair continues to celebrate its rich agricultural and community heritage, marking its 70th anniversary at Albertus Park in 2022.

The 2025 Fair dates are July 22-26, 2025.





The Fair of 2025 & Beyond

In recent years, the Stephenson County Fairgrounds have made significant strides in improving both infrastructure and community involvement. Over \$100,000 has been invested in essential upgrades, including plumbing, electrical, and roof repairs, along with accessibility improvements such as a ramp at the office. The launch of new programs has bolstered agricultural education, with highlights like cow-milking demonstrations and the Everyday Ag initiative planned for 2025. The fairgrounds have embraced a digital transformation, implementing a revamped website, online camping reservations, and soon, online ticketing. Community engagement has expanded through partnerships with local organizations such as the fire and police departments, which participate in fair events to enhance visitor experiences. Looking forward, the fairgrounds plan to cultivate a park-like atmosphere with additional trees and entertainment zones while continuing to secure funding for further infrastructure enhancements to meet the evolving needs of the community.

Meet Our Team

Executive Board

Gary Mielke, President
Wendell DeVries, Vice-President
Conor DeZell, Treasurer
Carla Meyer, Secretary

Members at Large

Abby Mielke At-Large
Kris Shore, At-Large

Appointed Members and their Organizations

Phil Heck, Farm Bureau
Victoria Hansen, Farm Bureau
Bill Clow, Greater Freeport Partnership
Jodi Miller, Greater Freeport Partnership
Brittani DeVries, FFA
Ann DeZell, FFA
Susie Dvorak, Home/Community Ed
Becky Thomas, Home/Community Ed
Denise Hayunga, 4-H & Extension Council
Ethan Trampel, 4-H & Extension Council

Employees

Kate Boyer, Executive Manager

Office

Amanda Meier, Fair Entries
Denise Caldwell, Office

Grounds

Jeff Kaiser, Grounds Manager
Denise Sandell, Grounds



Gary Mielke, President



Vision And Mission

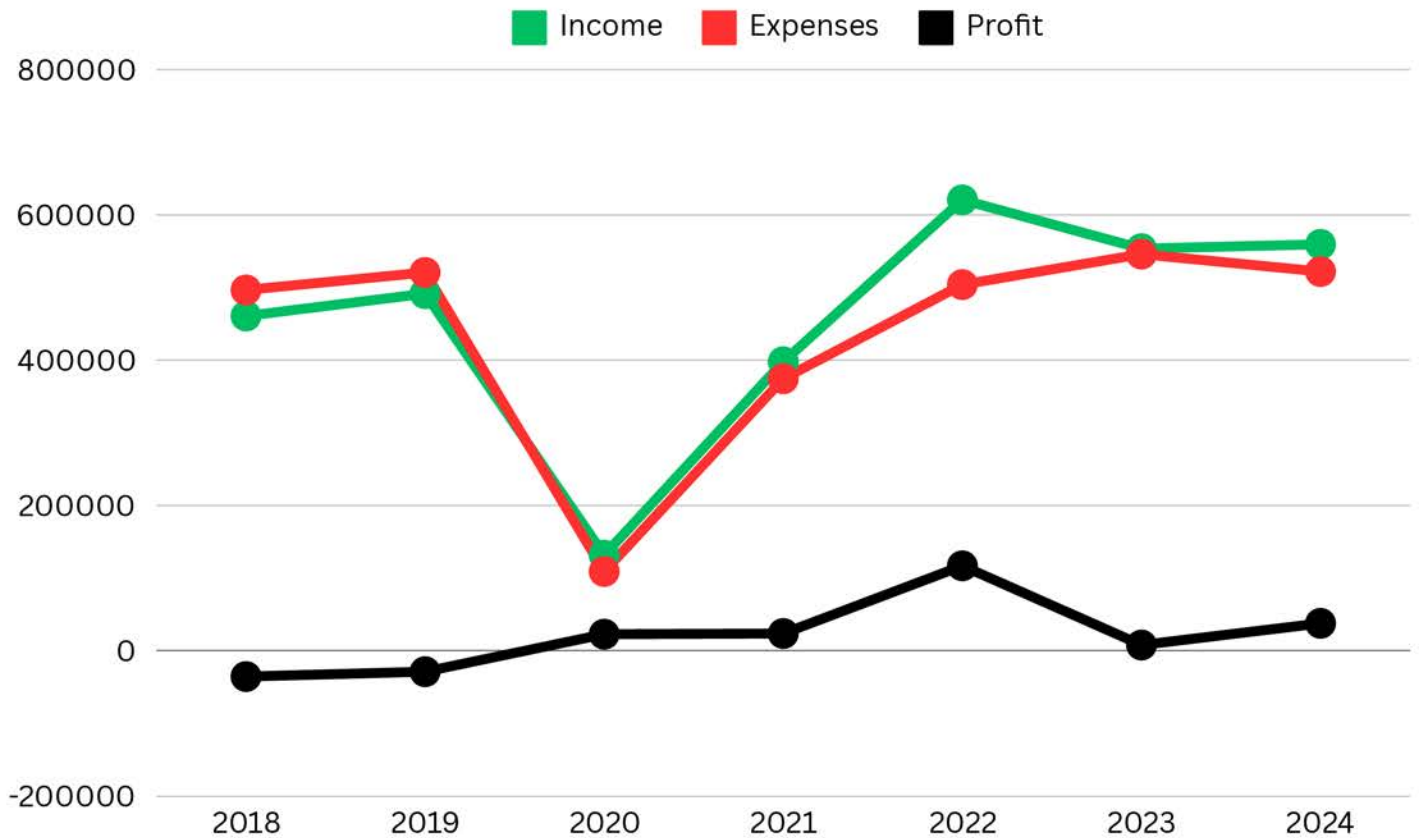
Vision

To be the premier county fair and community event hub in northern Illinois, offering metropolitan-class entertainment alongside rich agricultural experiences. Our vision includes enhancing year-round facility use, welcoming diverse visitors, and fostering community partnerships to preserve and celebrate our agricultural heritage while providing dynamic entertainment and educational opportunities for future generations.

Mission

To support and promote agriculture, education, entertainment, and community engagement by providing high-quality events, programs, and facilities that serve the diverse needs of residents and visitors of Stephenson County and the surrounding region

7 Year Financial Trend



From 2021 to 2023, we were fortunate to host pipeline campers, which contributed over \$60,000 annually and had a significant positive impact on our bottom line. As this income stream ended, we have been gradually replacing it through new initiatives in 2023 and 2024. Despite these changes, we have successfully maintained a profit over the past several years, reinvesting those earnings back into improvements and enhancements at the fairgrounds.

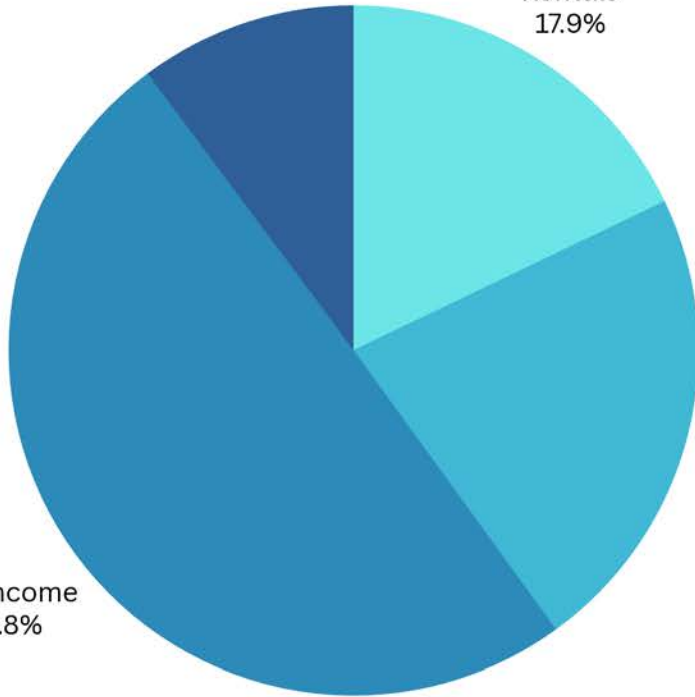
2024 Financial Breakdown

State Reimbursement
10.2%

Rentals
17.9%

2024 Breakdown of Income

To diversify our income streams, we have focused on expanding both our sponsorship program, which has grown by 30% since 2018, and our grounds rental program, which has increased by 66% over the same period.



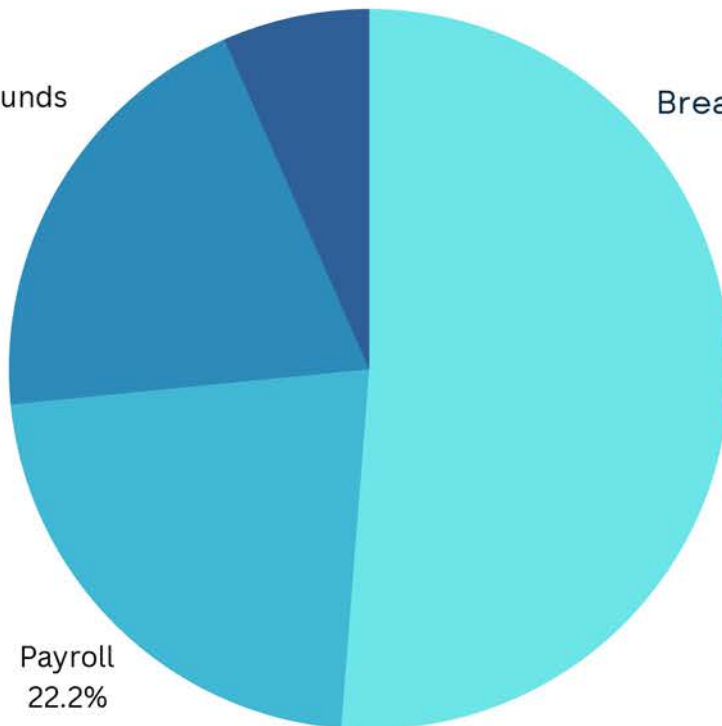
Sponsorship & Grants
22.1%

Fair Income
49.8%

General & Administrative
6.6%

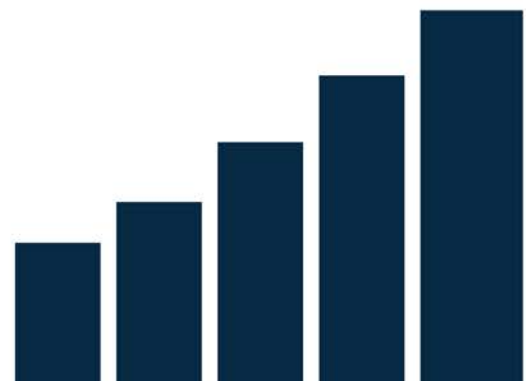
Building & Grounds
20%

Breakdown of 2024 Expenses



Fair Expenses
51.2%

Payroll
22.2%





In Conclusion

Looking ahead, the Stephenson County Fairgrounds remains committed to serving as a cornerstone for agricultural education, entertainment, and community engagement in Northwest Illinois. Through continued infrastructure improvements, expanded programming, and strong community partnerships, we aim to build on the successes of recent years. Our vision is to provide a vibrant, welcoming space where residents and visitors alike can connect, learn, and celebrate. We thank our sponsors, partners, and community members for their ongoing support and look forward to an exciting future together.



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www.stephensoncountyfair.org