

Shawano County FAIR

Sept. 2-7,
2026



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Friday, August 28, 2026

Shawano County Fair ready for 2026

Lifetime members getting cards for entry to fairgrounds

By **LEE PULASKI**
City Editor

Lifetime members of the Shawano County Fair will be getting into the fairgrounds by different means when the fair starts its latest run Sept. 2.

The Shawano Area Agricultural Society is now issuing cards to lifetime members that can be used year after year, according to society President Scott Breitrack. Previously, lifetime members received wristbands each year that had to be mailed out to those members who did not make it to the fair office to pick them up.

The new cards have QR codes that will be scanned by volunteers at entry points.

Last year, the fair had more than 70,000 visitors, Breitrack said, but there was no way to count how many of those who came through the gates were lifetime members. The cards will help to determine that, he said, as the regular season passes will remain the standard

wristbands the society has used for years.

“We honestly don’t know how many lifetime members come in,” Breitrack said. “We had no way to track it. This card will keep forever, so it’s not like we’ve got to send a wristband every year. That was an expense for us.”

Returning to the fair this year are the monster trucks, Breitrack said. The event kicks off at 1 p.m. Sept. 7 at the grandstand, but prior to that, Shawano Area United Way and Ho-Chunk Gaming are sponsoring an inflatable race where people in inflatable costumes like dinosaurs can run 40 yards on the pit lane. Admission for the truck rally will be \$20 for adults and \$10 for children, with 2 and younger getting in free.

There will be plenty of bands playing throughout the fair beneath the grandstand, on the midway and in President’s Park. A new addition to this year’s fair is Shotgun Jane, based out of Janesville. The band will perform at 8 p.m. Sept. 6



Goats and other animals will be paraded around the coliseum for most of the Shawano County Fair, with the big event being the livestock auction Sept. 4.

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and will showcase a mix of pop and rock-country.

“The bands are always a big thing under the grandstand,” Breitrack said. “We have a band on the midway stage every day this year. We’ve got more bands than we ever had. Cherry Pie’s

on for Saturday night, and they’ve been a big attraction.”

One of the biggest events at the fair is the livestock auction, which kicks off at 6:30 p.m. Sept. 4 in the coliseum. Breitrack said there will be some new rubber mats in

the coliseum as exhibitors show their animals for people to bid on.

“It’s just the excitement of people wanting to buy, and kids going out and physically asking people to come,” he said. “It’s really great for us.”

The fair will hold its

usual opening ceremony on the midway Sept. 2 at 6 p.m. Shawano County Clerk Raymond Rigsby will be the featured speaker as the fair celebrates the United States’ 250th anniversary.

FAIR, continued on page 3

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FAIR, continued from page 2

The anniversary celebration will really be noticeable the following night as Fireworks Country shoots off fireworks after dusk.

“It’ll be bigger and better than ever,” Breitrick said.

Bingo continues to be a big draw for the fair, according to Breitrick.

The games commence at 5 p.m. Sept. 3 and then at 12:30 p.m. Sept. 4-7.

“I’m sure that will be packed a lot of days,” Breitrick said. “It’s hard sometimes to find a chair,

even.”

Breitrick noted the fair has been lucky to have the last two seasons where rain didn’t fall during the day, allowing for plenty of people to come check out the animals, exhibits, carnival rides and more.

“We got lucky last year that it rained during the night, and it was nice the next morning,” Breitrick said. “That’s all that we can do is hope for good weather.”

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America’s Dairyland includes plenty of representation from Shawano County’s cows, most of them raised by local 4-H members.

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The midway will feature plenty of games and rides — not to mention a variety of foods, including offerings from some local organizations.

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Zeeman named Fairest of the Fair

By **LEE PULASKI**
City Editor

Sophia Zeeman emerged victorious from a crowded field of candidates June 28 to become the 2026 Fairest of the Fair for Shawano County.

Five young women competed to become this year's Fairest, the most that the Shawano County Fair has had compete for some time. Zeeman, as the winner crowned during the Shawano County Brunch on the Farm, will represent the county for the next 12 months as she attends other county fairs and various farm events and parades, as well as preside over the local fair when it's held over Labor Day weekend.

"The girls are promoting our fair, and they're promoting it throughout the year," said Kerry Danley, one of the coordinators for Fairest of the Fair. "We have it so they can learn a little more self-confidence, public speaking, everything else."

Zeeman expressed delight that she'll be able to showcase Shawano County and its fair as the official ambassador at other fairs and participate in parades, her first coming up as Bonduel kicks off 250 years of United States independence.

"I'm really excited to do this," Zeeman said. "I'm really excited to go to all of the events and get to promote the county fair."

Zeeman and the other contestants were interviewed June 27, and the winner was selected from those interviews.

Zeeman said she has lived in Shawano County her entire life, and she has shown animals at the fair growing up.

"I just always saw the girls around, and I wanted to help promote the fair and do stuff like that," she said.

The county fair, in Zeeman's view, is "one big community event" that brings the entire county together and helps to promote pride in what Shawano County has to offer.

"It's just like a big family reunion, and it's one of the best parts of the summer for me," Zeeman said.

She added she gets to be outdoors for much of her time as Fairest of the Fair, a spot she enjoys having grown up on a farm.

"I really enjoy seeing everyone outside in community settings," Zeeman said. "I feel like it's a really special year, and I'm going to have a lot of fun."

Besides the Shawano County Fair, Zeeman said she's most looking forward to participating in

the Outagamie County Fair, which was wrapping up during her coronation but will be an event she gets to visit in 2027 as her reign comes to a close.

Zeeman attends Fox Valley Technical College, where she is pursuing a degree in the culinary arts. She is also currently a member of the Landstad 4-H.

The four other contestants were recognized during brunch, as well. Hannah Yeager was named first runner-up, while Faith Posbrig, Matti Koehler and Kendall Wilcox were named fair ambassadors.

The 2025 Fairest of the Fair, Olivia Danley, spoke briefly about her experience before crowning Zeeman as her successor and giving her an idea of where her life will be going over the next year.

"This journey has been nothing short of incredible, and it is something that I will carry with me for the rest of my life," she said. "The number of people I have had the privilege of meeting, the events I have had the honor of attending and the lessons I have learned along the way have shaped me in ways I never expected."



Sophia Zeeman, right, is crowned as the 2026 Shawano County Fairest of the Fair by her predecessor, Olivia Danley, on June 28 during the Shawano County Brunch on the Farm at Kurowski Dairy just east of Bonduel. Zeeman was victorious after competing with four other Shawano County women the day before.

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How much does it cost to get into and park at the county fair?

The annual Shawano County Fair kicks off Sept. 2 and runs daily through Labor Day, Sept. 7.

Gates open at 5 p.m. Sept. 2. Admission is \$3 for those 12 and older, and free for anyone 11 and younger. Parking is free on opening night.

From Sept. 3-7, the gates open at 9 a.m. Adults and children 12 and older get in for \$7, and again anyone 11 and younger gets in for free.

The daily parking fee is \$5.

The main entrance at the fairgrounds is on Fairview Street Gate 1.

There will be free shuttle ride from the east parking area.

Senior Citizen Day is Sept. 6. Anyone 62 and older gets in for \$2. Parking is still \$5.

A season ticket is \$30 and includes daily gate admission and parking during the duration of the fair. It does not include grandstand admission or rides.

A lifetime membership is \$500. This entitles the holder, spouse and children up to 16 years of age

free admission to the Shawano County Fair. Applications are available at the fair office.

Most grandstand events will have additional entrance fees.

The county farm tractor pull will begin at 6:30 p.m. Sept. 2. Admission is \$5.

The fireworks display at dusk Sept. 3 is free for all.

The championship stock car races will begin at 6 p.m. Sept. 5. Admission is \$12 for seniors, \$15 for ages 17 and older, \$6 for ages 11-16 and free for ages 10 and younger with a paid adult.

Starting at noon Sept. 6 is the demolition derby. Admission is \$12 for 17 and older, \$6 for ages 12-16 and free for ages 10 and younger with a paid adult. The monster trucks event starts at 1 p.m. Sept. 7. Get through the gates for \$20 for adults, \$10 for children 3-17 and free for those 2 and younger with a paid adult.

Dogs and glass bottles are not allowed on the fairgrounds or the grandstands.



It's championship night at the Shawano Speedway on Sept. 6 as drivers have one last chance to take home the 2026 title in their division.

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Griffin Holeywinski and Blissful are about to enter the Coliseum for the Dairy Cattle Show at the 2025 Shawano County Fair. Blissful was owned by Holeywinski's cousin, Lydia Rasmussen.
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Fair highlights year's worth of 4-H work

Memories, friendships
more important than
ribbons that are won

By **KEVIN PASSON**
Editor-in-Chief

County fairs are about much more than exhibits, auctions and competitions. They provide an opportunity to bring the community together and showcase the learning, creativity, hard work and personal growth of its young people.

“For me, being at the fair is about helping people make those connections – between youths and caring adults, families and community resources and learning and real-life experiences,” said Megan Suehring, 4-H positive youth development educator with the University of Wisconsin-Madison Division of Extension Shawano County. “It is a privilege to be part of an event that celebrates our young people while creating opportunities for the entire community to learn, engage and grow together.”

During the fair, Suehring’s role is centered on education and community connection, with a focus on supporting youths,

families and fair visitors. “Throughout the week, I work alongside fair volunteers and partners, answer questions, provide guidance related to 4-H projects and youth development, and help create positive and meaningful experiences,” she said.

Suehring noted that 4-H learning happens 52 weeks a year.

“Youths are caring for and training their animals days, weeks and sometimes years before September rolls around,” she said. “Kids are meeting in community club and after-school 4-H club settings every month to improve leadership skills and plan community service events. Youths are increasing their skills in designated project areas, from trapping to foods and nutrition, deciding to bring specific exhibits for judging at the fair.”

Suehring said 4-H’s partnership with the Shawano County Fair provides youths with a place where they can have projects judged, receiving critique for how to make their exhibits even better.



Megan Suehring is the 4-H positive youth development educator with the University of Wisconsin-Madison Division of Extension Shawano County.

CONTRIBUTED

She said one of her favorite parts of the fair is creating hands-on opportunities for visitors to learn.

“Shawano County 4-H

provides education stations, informational displays and interactive scavenger hunts that invite people of all ages to explore, ask questions and discover more about 4-H and the many project areas available to local youths,” she said.

“The week also features the Shawano County 4-H Leaders Inc. main fundraiser, the 4-H Food Stand, which is the main source of financial support toward 4-H educational and outreach programs and youth travel opportunities. The cheeseburgers,

chocolate shakes and watermelon that are purchased directly support Shawano County 4-H kids. It also provides a place for youths and adult volunteers to improve food safety and preparation, teamwork and customer service skills.”

The Shawano County 4-H Program features four youth auctions that happen during the fair:

- Decorated Cake Auction, 5 p.m. Sept. 4 in the Hunting Family Youth and 4-H Building.

- Livestock Auction, 6:30 p.m. Sept. 4 in the

Coliseum.

- Youth Dairy Auction, 6:30 p.m. Sept. 5 in the Coliseum.

- Small Animal Auction, 10 a.m. Sept. 7 in the Coliseum.

Shawano County 4-H has an enrollment of about 570 youths in 19 community clubs, and an additional 200 are in after-school and organizational 4-H clubs and programming at Gresham and Marion school districts, Shawano Boys and Girls Club, Bridge the Gap and the Stockbridge-Munsee Mohican Family Center.

Like many adults involved in 4-H, Suehring’s favorite part of the fair is seeing the hard work of youths on display.

“That doesn’t always mean earning a merit ribbon or being the grand champion,” she said. “(It’s) kids helping other kids – whether it’s washing chickens, grabbing an ice cream together after disappointment or sharing showing tips before walking in the ring. I love seeing fair friends greet each other like they’re at a family reunion. We chuckle hearing the tales of the escapee pig and the cake that cracked.”

“Most of all, I enjoy seeing kids feel proud of the projects they have made, skills they have learned and hours they have put in.”

The week of the fair is full of highs and lows for everyone involved.

“The memories and friendships you make are more important than the ribbons you will take home at the end of the week,” Suehring said.

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Livestock auction draws a crowd



The 2025 Shawano County Fair livestock auction had a record number of animals (more than 200) and included 120 buyers and 200 registered bidders.

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