

FLORIDA STATE FAIR AUTHORITY

2023 ANNUAL REPORT

FLORIDA 
STATE FAIRGROUNDS

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FLORIDA STATE FAIR AUTHORITY MISSION STATEMENT

The mission of the Florida State Fairgrounds is to create positive entertainment experiences through:

- ◆ The annual Florida State Fair.
- ◆ A variety of year-round events.
- ◆ Quality competitive programs.
- ◆ A commitment to agriculture, education, and community service.
- ◆ A focus on new opportunities.



HISTORY AND ORGANIZATION

Today the Florida State Fair is one of the largest fairs and festivals in the United States and Canada. However, the history of the Fair is a microcosm of the History of Florida, with its fortunes rising and falling with the “booms and busts” of Florida’s often stormy development. Early records reflect that on May 15, 1868, merchants in and around Jacksonville hosted the Grand Consolidation Festival, a bold gesture for Reconstruction Florida just after the conclusion of the Civil War.

By 1873, tourism was a big business in Jacksonville, and the Jacksonville Board of Trade came up with the idea of a state fair to increase tourism and combat the effects of the financial panic of 1873. The popularity of these fairs led to the establishment of a permanent fair building on a 20-acre site, known as the Fairfield. The Florida Fruit Growers Association joined with the Duval County Agricultural and Horticultural Society as sponsors of the Florida State Fair, which opened February 22, 1876. Opening day dignitaries at the 1887 Florida State Fair included President Grover Cleveland, who proclaimed, “Floridians are a people who represent not only a new South, but a new era of American life.”

The success of the Florida State Fair waxed and waned, and the Jacksonville event was replaced by the Sub-Tropical Exposition from 1888 until 1892. These extravaganzas were open during tourist season (January-April) and attracted thousands of visitors. However, amid Yellow Fever epidemic and other issues, the gates closed for the fourth season just 30 days after opening. Fairs in Jacksonville continued irregularly. In 1901, the Board of Lady Managers formed to create a “first genuine state agricultural fair.” On May 3, 1901, Jacksonville was ravaged by a catastrophic fire, but six months later, the Florida State Fair opened as a symbol of the indomitable spirit of the people of Jacksonville.

Today’s Florida State Fair is part of the legacy railroad tycoon H.B. Plant bequeathed Florida. While similar activities were occurring in Jacksonville, in 1898, Plant inaugurated the Tampa Agricultural Racing and Fair Association as an event to promote his lavish Tampa Bay Hotel. In 1904, the event became formalized as the South Florida Fair Association, from which the modern Florida State Fair reportedly evolved. The Fair has occurred every year except during the World Wars, when the Fairs were cancelled in 1918, and 1942 through 1945. The Tampa Fair eventually became the Florida State Fair when the Jacksonville Association sold the rights of the name to the Tampa organization in 1937. By 1961, the fair was listed as the Florida State Fair and Gasparilla Association, Inc.



HISTORY AND ORGANIZATION (continued)

In 1974, by Florida Statutes 616, the Florida Legislature created the Florida State Fair Authority and reaffirmed the annual Tampa event as the official Florida State Fair. After being held for more than 70 years on a 27-acre plot adjoining the University of Tampa, which was the former Tampa Bay Hotel, the Florida State Fair moved to its current 330-acre site, the Florida State Fairgrounds, seven miles east of Downtown Tampa on Interstate 4 and U.S. Hwy 301. The first Florida State Fair was held at the new fairgrounds in February 1977. While the grounds were being developed, the 1976 Fair was held at the former Tampa Stadium.

Funding for the purchase and development of the Florida State Fairgrounds came from the State Legislature and revenue bonds issued by the Florida State Fair Authority. Initial operating monies were from funds accumulated by the former Florida State Fair, Gasparilla Association, Inc., and other private sources. The Florida State Fair Authority holds title to the property.

Effective July 1, 1995, Senate Bill 932 (Chapter 95-220) gave the Commissioner of Agriculture sole responsibility to appoint a 21-member Florida State Fair Authority. The members serve a term of four years and may be appointed for more than one term.

With the assistance of the Department of Agriculture, the Florida State Fair Authority's financial position has improved so that the Authority now has the resources to conduct a continuing capital maintenance program. The Florida State Fair Authority provides a wholesome, family-oriented annual program for the citizens of Florida and its many visitors. Florida State Fair programs have undergone a continuing review process in an effort to control costs and improve revenues. All Authority activities are conducted in compliance with the Florida Sunshine Law.

An August 2006 study conducted by the University of South Florida Center for Economic Development determined the activities of the Florida State Fair Authority supported a total of 1,267 jobs in the State of Florida, \$171.4 million in sales and \$43.4 million in wages.



LONG RANGE PLANNING

In September 2006, the Florida State Fair Authority Board adopted a new Long-Range Plan recommended by Bullock, Smith and Partners. Bullock, Smith and Partners is an architectural and planning firm that has completed more than 100 fairgrounds projects in 38 states and worldwide.

In December 2012, the Long-Range Planning committee attempted to prioritize the major components of the Plan and narrowed the priorities to the following three areas along with their estimated cost:

1. Expansion/Renovation of Expo Hall - \$35.7 mil
2. Other Building Renovations/Relocations/Additions - \$3.7 mil
3. Roads/Infrastructure/Other - \$3.5 mil

The Long-Range Plan also included an RV Park concept with an estimated cost of \$4.0 mil. The conceptual recommendations of an RV park feasibility study were accepted by the Board at a meeting on April 21, 2009. However, this plan was put on hold as the Authority searched for a more comprehensive plan for developing the Fairgrounds. The Board recognized that any development plan for the Fairgrounds must be in compliance with the Live Nation Amphitheatre Agreement, the Centerplate food services agreement and applicable State Statutes.

In November of 2013 the Authority, after receiving approval by the Board, released an Invitation to Participate (ITP) for the purpose of having development firms present their ideas on potential opportunities for the Fairground. After months of evaluation and then negotiations with Republic Land Development, the Board voted unanimously to reject a proposal from Republic at the December 15, 2015, Board meeting. At this time no additional proposals have been either received or solicited by the Fair Authority and all major developments are currently on hold.



Membership June 30, 2023

Honorable Wilton Simpson Tallahassee, FL	Richard Bowman Delray Beach, FL New Term: Sept. 29, 2022 – June 28, 2025
Reggie Holt Lakeland, FL Term: March 20, 2023 – March 19, 2027	Charles “Chuck” Bruno Riverview, FL New Term: June 30, 2022 – June 29, 2026
Jake Raburn Lithia, FL New Term: March 20, 2023 – March 19, 2027	Doyle E. Carlton, III Wauchula, FL New Term: June 30, 2021 - June 30, 2025
Susanne Clemons Okeechobee, FL New Term: May 30, 2023 – May 29, 2027	Cynthia B. Sanders, Phd Tampa, FL New Term: June 29, 2022 – June 28, 2026
Robert Thomas Thonotosassa, FL New Term: March 20, 2023 – March 19, 2027	John “Jack” T. Vogel San Antonio, FL Term: July 1, 2022 – June 29, 2026
Eve Council Gloede Tampa, FL New Term: March 31, 2021 - March 31, 2025	Marcia Lightsey Lake Wales, FL New Term: June 30, 2021 – June 30, 2025
Chad Lyons Mayo, FL New Term: March 20, 2023 – March 19, 2027	A.D. “Sandy” MacKinnon Tampa, FL New Term: June 30, 2022 – June 29, 2026
Charlie Lykes Lake Placid, FL New Term: March 20, 2023 – March 19, 2027	Honorable Gwen Myers, District 3 Tampa, FL Term: December 2, 2020 – June 6, 2024
Ted Schrader Tampa, FL Term: March 20, 2023 – March 19, 2027	Amanda Taylor St. Pete, FL New Term: June 6, 2022 – June 5, 2026
Linda Syfrett Okeechobee, FL New Term: June 30, 2022 – June 29, 2026	Thaddeus Bullard Lutz, FL Term: January 6, 2021 – May 29, 2025
Archie Collins Tampa, FL Term: March 20, 2023 – March 19, 2027	

June 30, 2023 Officers

Chairman – Susanne Clemons
 Vice Chairman – Jake Raburn
 Treasurer – Linda Syfrett
 Secretary – Eve Council Gloede

Management Staff as of June 30, 2023

Executive Director.....	Cheryl Flood
Chief Operating Officer.....	Michael Rogalsky
Chief Financial Officer.....	John Prestianni
Director of Museum Operations.....	Cindy Horton
Director of Agribusiness.....	Lynnann Hudson
Director of Equestrian.....	Jerel Clay Crosby
Director of Human Resources.....	Laura Clark
Director of Information Technology.....	Scott Baker
Director of Marketing & Partnerships.....	Patty Chandler
Facilities Director.....	Rodney Walker
Event Services Manager.....	Zack Kunkel
Sales Manager for Events	Cynthia Burgos

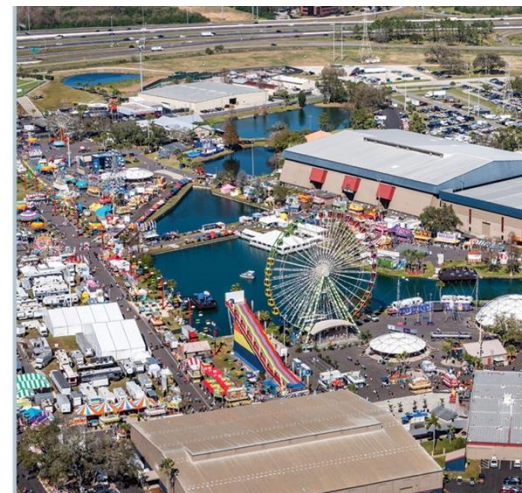
2023 FLORIDA STATE FAIR – February 9th through 20th, 2023

SUMMARY OF DAILY ATTENDANCE AND REVENUE WITH COMPARISON TO 2022 and 2021

		ATTENDANCE			REVENUE		
		2023	2022	2021	2023	2022	2021
DAY 1	Thursday	15,233	15,146	15,275	\$84,191	\$68,658	\$69,635
DAY 2	Friday	17,148	16,061	14,732	149,662	147,062	133,960
DAY 3	Saturday	34,283	49,631	40,092	342,240	556,431	413,618
DAY 4	Sunday	29,288	23,440	29,551	300,095	243,873	292,941
DAY 5	Monday	18,489	19,643	15,643	150,591	116,772	108,607
DAY 6	Tuesday	23,804	26,854	24,482	161,453	88,383	73,475
DAY 7	Wednesday	19,931	19,771	16,197	164,755	157,019	119,001
DAY 8	Thursday	29,784	22,168	18,646	143,235	175,995	142,239
DAY 9	Friday	47,126	64,394	24,636	385,699	464,069	221,203
DAY 10	Saturday	72,297	67,949	52,344	832,779	798,465	552,658
DAY 11	Sunday	66,462	68,900	40,771	764,235	772,300	417,250
DAY 12	Monday	32,043	34,243	N/A	303,120	303,120	N/A
TOTALS		405,888	428,200	292,369	\$3,757,275	\$3,892,147	\$2,544,587

* 2021 Fair Dates were moved from February to April due to Covid19 and the Fair was reduced from 12 days to 11 days as a result of this date change.

** Revenue excludes unredeemed advance sales and payments for credential permits and photo IDs.



**FLORIDA STATE FAIR AUTHORITY
FISCAL YEAR 2024 BUDGET + PRIOR 2 YEARS ACTUALS**

	<u>2024 BUDGET</u>	<u>2023 ACTUAL</u>	<u>2022 ACTUAL</u>
REVENUE:			
FAIR INCOME	\$ 14,567,500	\$13,383,200	\$ 13,911,600
NON-FAIR INCOME	6,163,300	6,593,300	5,723,300
EQUESTRIAN	1,619,700	1,572,400	1,476,000
AMPHITHEATRE REVENUE	1,470,500	1,193,200	1,633,200
CRACKER COUNTRY	438,800	480,400	352,500
OTHER INCOME	658,900	697,600	1,083,200
INTEREST INCOME	48,000	77,400	22,500
TOTAL REVENUE	<u>24,966,700</u>	<u>23,997,500</u>	<u>24,202,300</u>
OPERATING EXPENSES:			
SALARIES & WAGES	6,322,700	5,685,500	5,215,700
PAYROLL & FRINGE BENEFITS	1,424,500	1,282,900	1,071,300
TELEPHONE & UTILITIES	1,923,200	1,756,200	1,525,200
COMMISSIONS	2,774,700	2,510,800	2,717,900
COST OF GOODS SOLD	323,800	339,200	338,900
SHOWS & TALENT	793,900	788,200	722,100
PROPERTY & LIABILITY INSURANCE	1,174,300	1,003,000	826,100
SUPPLIES, DECORATIONS & FUEL	911,700	1,027,600	785,300
CONTRACTED SERVICES	3,209,300	3,156,800	2,913,700
ADVERTISING & SIGNS	753,200	762,100	606,800
PREMIUMS & AWARDS	469,100	430,400	405,200
EQUIPMENT RENTALS	1,009,100	1,129,900	831,900
PROFESSIONAL & LEGAL FEES	274,000	349,200	102,200
TRAVEL AND LODGING	103,300	116,500	95,700
AUTO, TRUCK & EQUIPMENT REPAIR	79,900	100,200	68,600
SPECIAL EVENTS	289,000	294,000	273,400
POSTAGE & PRINTING	130,000	143,200	169,000
INTEREST EXPENSE	47,400	48,800	47,400
CREDIT CARD / BANK FEES	337,000	309,500	291,600
LUNCHEONS & MEETINGS	93,100	93,100	90,800
OTHER EXPENSES	111,800	141,100	95,500
TOTAL OPERATING EXPENSES	<u>22,555,000</u>	<u>21,468,200</u>	<u>19,194,300</u>
INCOME PRIOR TO DEPRECIATION	2,411,700	2,529,300	5,008,000
DEPRECIATION	(3,179,600)	(2,891,200)	(2,745,900)
OTHER GAIN/(LOSS)	-	49,000	(42,200)
GASB 87 ADJUSTMENT	-	311,600	291,000
NET INCOME BEFORE GRANTS	<u>\$ (767,900)</u>	<u>\$ (1,300)</u>	<u>\$ 2,510,900</u>
GOVERNMENTAL GRANTS	3,936,300	1,841,500	1,000,000
NET INCOME	<u>\$ 3,168,400</u>	<u>1,840,200</u>	<u>\$ 3,510,900</u>

COMPARISON OF STATE FAIR REVENUE SOURCES

	<u>2023</u>	<u>2022</u>	<u>2021</u>	<u>2020</u>	<u>2019</u>	<u>2018</u>
ADMISSIONS	\$4,055,500	\$4,123,200	\$2,648,100	\$3,743,300	\$3,608,200	\$3,308,400
MIDWAY	5,205,800	5,719,700	4,096,500	5,419,900	5,752,700	5,037,500
CONCESSIONS	1,788,500	1,825,900	1,656,700	1,751,900	1,723,500	1,731,400
SPONSORSHIPS	991,100	993,600	1,011,300	1,166,900	1,058,900	1,056,100
EXHIBITS	562,600	561,700	399,100	645,800	651,800	610,800
AGRICULTURE	503,300	432,300	396,900	420,200	437,600	403,700
OTHER	276,400	255,200	173,000	327,700	346,500	326,900
TOTALS	\$13,383,200	\$13,911,600	\$10,381,600	\$13,475,600	\$13,579,200	\$12,474,800



OVERVIEW OF FINANCIAL ACTIVITY

On June 27, 2022, the Authority Board approved an operational budget with net gain of \$156,400 for fiscal year 2023. Due to lower than budgeted attendance at the 2023 Fair, the Authority fell over one million dollars short of the Fair Revenue budget. However, significantly higher revenue in our Non-Fair and Equestrian events more than offset the Fair revenue deficit and the Authority was able to exceed the revenue budget for the fiscal year. Rising prices in the economy presented a serious challenge for Authority expenditures in FY2023. The Fair Authority experienced savings in payroll and in the midway commissions to ride operators. However large cost increases for rental of equipment, contracted services, advertising, along with the hiring of an outside counsel, fueled overall cost increases of 11.3% over our FY 2022 expenditures and 3.0% over the budgeted costs.

The Authority also approved a capital budget in the amount of \$6,531,000 for fiscal year 2023, with state funding of \$3,000,000 to fund our largest capital projects. The Authority spent \$5,729,156 for fiscal year 2023, with two of our largest projects under construction as of June 30, 2023. Both projects are scheduled for completion in early FY2024. The Fair Authority was awarded \$3,000,000 in government grants of which \$1,573,119 was used in FY2023. The remainder to be utilized in early FY2024 to fund a majority of the two carryover projects.

The 2023 Fair attendance dropped to 405,888, due primarily to rain on our first Saturday. The Fair fell significantly short of budgeted projections due to lower revenue and significantly higher costs for rentals and contracted services.

As of June 30, 2023, our unrestricted cash and cash equivalents remained at a historically strong level at \$5,718,100. This balance is our second highest year-end amount but was down \$1,432,100 or 20% from our record cash reserves on June 30, 2022. Short-term investments were at \$2,588,500 as of June 30, 2023, with a slight increase of \$41,000 over FY 2022.

The Authority starts fiscal year 2024 with healthy cash reserves and a positive event outlook. Spending on capital expenditures in the coming fiscal year will be robust, with an additional governmental grant of \$2.5 million in place for fiscal year 2024.

STATEMENTS OF NET POSITION

<u>CATEGORY</u>	<u>BALANCES</u>		<u>Notes on Category Changes</u>
	<u>6/30/23</u>	<u>6/30/22</u>	
Unrestricted Cash	\$5,718,100	\$7,150,300	Reduction due to significantly higher level of capital spending in FY2023
Accounts Receivable (net)	876,700	996,400	The decrease is primarily from lower amounts due from Live Nation on the variable parking.
Gross Fixed Assets	87,128,700	81,399,500	Paving of inner roadways and equestrian areas (\$983,800), new Credentials building (\$660,500), I4 billboard replacement (\$532,100), and IT Upgrades (\$442,600) comprise additions over \$400,000.
Accounts Payables/ Accrued Expenses	1,335,500	1,381,600	No material changes in this area
Deferred Service Concession Arrangements	173,800	219,300	Normal amortization of concession agreement
LT Capital Leases	1,061,500	1,129,700	Normal amortization of debt instruments.



MANAGEMENT'S DISCUSSION

The following management's discussion and analysis (MD&A) of the financial performance and activity of the Florida State Fair Authority (Authority) is to provide management's analysis of the financial statements of the Authority for the years ended June 30, 2023 and 2022 and key operational developments that occurred in the 2023 fiscal year. The information presented should be read in conjunction with the financial statements, notes and supplemental schedules found in this report.

STATEMENTS OF REVENUES, EXPENSES, AND CHANGES IN NET POSITION

The 2023 Fair operations generated \$13,362,800 in revenue offset by fair operation expenses of \$9,869,100 for an operating income from fair operations of \$3,514,100. The 2022 Fair operations generated \$13,911,600 in revenue offset by fair operation expenses of \$9,016,200 for an operating income from fair operations of \$4,895,400. Lower Fair revenue was primarily due to an attendance decrease of 5.2%. Inclement weather on the first Saturday was the main cause of the lower-than-expected attendance. Expenses, excluding commissions to ride operators, increased by almost 19% over the 2022 costs. Increases of over 20% in equipment rentals, payroll, utilities, and advertising costs fueled this cost increase.

The 2023 non-fair revenue was \$8,646,100 with \$3,879,400 in associated expenses for a net non-fair income of \$4,766,700. For fiscal year 2022, the non-fair revenue was \$7,551,900 with \$3,316,200 in associated expenses for a net non-fair income of \$4,235,700.

Other operating revenue (Amphitheatre, Long term leases, Billboard, etc.) was \$1,876,600 in 2023 versus \$2,705,100 in 2022. In fiscal years 2023 and 2022, respectively, \$1,497,900 and \$1,633,200 were attributed to the Amphitheater agreement. In addition, \$485,100 and \$471,500 were attributed to long-term lease agreements and contracts.

General and administrative expenses for fiscal year 2023 were \$7,671,000 compared to \$6,814,200 for fiscal year 2022. This was mainly driven from utility and employee benefits cost increases. Utilities experienced over a 15% rate increase and employee benefits included enhancement to the retirement plan and more employees enrolled on the health insurance.

Operating income before depreciation was \$2,466,100 for fiscal year 2023 as compared to \$5,022,000 for fiscal year 2022, a decrease of \$2,556,000.

Income from operations after depreciation for fiscal year 2023 was a loss of (\$404,600) compared to a gain of \$2,276,100 for fiscal year 2022. This was a decrease of \$2,701,200.

In fiscal years 2023 and 2022 other revenue (expenses) included \$1,573,100 and \$1,000,000 respectively in grants from the State of Florida and \$325,700 and \$302,800 respectively of interest income from the implementation of GASB 87 for long term leases. Other items related to interest, investment gain or losses and sale of assets totaled a net gain of (\$77,600) in 2023 as compared to a net loss of (\$67,100) in 2022, an increase of \$144,800 to the net position. The activity on the investments in both years was due to fluctuations in the Fair Value on investments in the state fund.

OPERATIONAL DEVELOPMENTS

The Fair Authority experienced a record year in FY2023 for our Non-fair, Equestrian and Cracker Country events with more than a 14% increase in revenue over FY2022. This was accomplished by adding 6 major events along with healthy growth in attendance for most of our returning events and school tours. Lower attendance at annual State Fair and a decrease in revenue from the Amphitheater offset almost entirely offset the gains from our year-round events.

Concerts at the Amphitheater resumed at the beginning of fiscal year 2022 with a record number 39 concerts booked. This pace slowed down in fiscal year 2023 with only 22 concerts and a reduction in tickets sold of over 40%.

Price increases in utilities, equipment rentals and contracted costs posed a challenge that is common throughout the economy. The Fair Authority also managed increased wage rates and hiring challenges in both 2023 and 2022 with numerous year-round positions throughout each year. The staff on hand were extremely productive and worked long hours to meet this challenge and efficiently run our events.

The Fair Authority had 5,729,156 and \$4,337,430 in capital additions in the fiscal years 2023 or 2022, respectively. The Fair Authority had no significant long term debt activity in either fiscal year 2023 or 2022, other than normal debt payment and amortization.

The Authority executed a contract for \$881,564 with Sprague Contracting, Inc. for the demolition and rebuild of our security gate along with widening and other improvements to the security gate entrance area. The work commenced in June of 2023 with payments totaling \$62,310. Outstanding commitments on the contract are \$819,254 with expected completion in September 2023.

The Authority executed a contract for \$686,841 with Bayco Contracting FL, LLC. for the demolition and rebuild of our Agricultural Offices. The work commenced in June of 2023 with a deposit of \$206,052. Outstanding commitments on the contract are \$480,489 with expected completion in December 2023.

The Authority had no significant changes in credit rating.

The Fair Authority is prohibited from borrowing funds except for issuance of bonds. However, due to the Authority having no tax revenue, the Authority has little or no ability to issue a bond.

The following long-term agreements were executed in Fiscal Year 2022:

A 5-year extension to the Cattleman's exhibit was approved by the Fair Authority Board on June 27, 2022, and executed on July 15, 2022.

A 5-year lease on a new postage machine was approved by the Fair Authority Board on June 27, 2022, and executed on July 16, 2022.

OPERATIONAL DEVELOPMENTS (Continued)

A 3-year sponsorship agreement with Cellular Sales starting at the 2023 annual state fair was approved by the Fair Authority Board on June 27, 2022, and executed on August 9, 2022.

3-year agreements for the Florida Gold Coast and Florida Gulf Coast equestrian events in December and January were approved by the Fair Authority Board on June 27, 2022, and executed in December of 2022.

A 3-year agreement with Hillsborough Community College (effective May 4, 2023) was approved by the Fair Authority Board on December 13, 2022, and executed on January 30, 2023.

A 3-year agreement with Joseph Volleyball Camps (a two-weekend event) was approved by the Fair Authority Board on December 13, 2022, and executed on February 10, 2023.

A 3-year agreement with Saffire ticketing was approved by the Fair Authority Board on December 13, 2022, and effective on the same date.

A 3-year agreement with Payment Alliance for operation of fairground's ATM machines was approved by the Fair Authority Board on December 13, 2022, and effective on the same date.

A 3-year sponsorship agreement with Tampa Electric for naming rights to our arena was approved by the Fair Authority Board on December 13, 2022, and effective on January 1, 2023. Payments on the contract were completed by Tampa Electric in a timely manner, but the executed was not received by the Fair Authority until July 24, 2023.

A 3-year agreement with Herpetorama Inc. dba "Repticon" was approved by the Fair Authority Board on December 13, 2022, and executed on January 3, 2023.

A 3-year agreement with Bay Area Apartment Association was approved by the Fair Authority Board on April 24, 2023, and executed on May 26, 2023.



FAIR ACTIVITIES

The 118th Florida State Fair in 2023 saw Fair attendance decrease from 428,200 to 405,888 due primarily to poor weather on our first weekend. Our guests visited this year's fair to check out thrilling entertainment, delicious foods and exciting rides and exhibits. Our financial performance for the 2023 Fair was still strong despite the attendance decrease, with Fair Net Income of over \$3.5 million.

The Florida State Fair once again offered lots of current and fresh entertainment acts to give guests a top-notch entertainment experience for 2023. New performers included Cycle Circus Live, an arena quality show, The Flying Royals, the world's only crisscross flying trapeze act, Bello Nocks Aqua Rock and so much more! The fair also added many local music acts never seen at the State Fair.

There was plenty of new and exciting foods available throughout the fairgrounds for guests to indulge on and add to the Florida State Fair experience. Vendors had the opportunity to participate in the new Three Dollar Thursday which allowed them to serve up sample sized fair foods for a great price. This allowed fairgoers to have an opportunity to taste so much more compared to having to pay full price for fair food. We once again offered an "only at the fair" flavored cider and Sound Spot in conjunction with a partnership with Keel Farms. The "Fan Favorite Food" was the Tampa Cuban Funnel Cake.

We continue to increase the amount of strolling entertainment for our guests. This allows us to better control the flow of the fair, making sure guests remain spread out and get a chance to see everything that we have to offer. In the equestrian center, we brought back the fan favorite Demolition Derby for two nights of action-packed fun. In this area we also offered a livestock judging contest and dog show for 4-H and FFA youth to participate in as well as the public to enjoy.

We experienced strong midway sales of slightly under \$4.7 million. Our second Saturday was only our second "million-dollar" midway day in the fair history and contributed to an extremely strong weekend. Our midway partner provided 90 rides for fair goers to enjoy.

Our Livestock events featured more than 5,000 animals to both entertain & educate our patrons. Many of these patrons participated in the hands-on activities offered at the Ag-Venture Exhibit located in the Ag Hall of Fame Building. They also visited the Mooternity Ward (which was relocated to the TECO Arena) where they saw baby Holstein calves being born. The Florida Cattlemen's Museum and Forestry Discovery Center were the crowd favorites.

Little Farm Hands was relocated to the Ag Hall of Fame Building. "Little Farm Hands" kids, (ages 3-8) become farm hands at this free, hands-on exhibit as they are provided the opportunity to experience the agricultural process, beginning at the farm and ending at the market. The exhibit was relocated this year to enhance the fair-goers experience in the Ag Hall of Fame Building. With Little Farm Hands and Ag-Venture, we have made the building an Ag Education Destination.

The Florida Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services presented the “Insect Encounter” that once again entertained patrons with bugs and other crawling creatures. This year, this exhibit was moved to their own building location. By moving Little Farm Hands, this opened up the space to Insect Encounter to be their own educational destination. People were excited to see this exhibit have their own space.

Florida’s Learning Garden had staff available to talk to fairgoers about caring for a mature/established landscape, how to create a small-scale organic vegetable garden and much more. In the Agriculture Hall of Fame building, Ag-Venture became the center exhibit focusing on the Importance of Florida Agriculture. This exhibit had hands-on activities like Strawberry DNA, Making Butter, “There is a Cow in my Truck” and much more. The Florida Peanut Federation created a field of peanuts in the center of the exhibit so fairgoers could see actual plants growing.

Cracker Country Living History Museum once again offered fairgoers a chance to step into rural Florida history before the turn of the 20th century. Our permanent collection of historic 19th century buildings was enhanced by over 25 period craft, cooking and life skills demonstrators and vendors. Musical entertainment featured bluegrass bands Southern Express and Bits of Grass and American Folk Music entertainer and educator, Buffalo Barfield. Cracker Country is included with Fair admission.

In 2023 the Florida Center hosted STEAM fest. Held in the Florida Center iconic “Red Room”, this 2000 sq. ft. exhibit area featured Science, Technology, Engineering, Arts and Math related hands-on interactive fun and learning opportunities for all ages, including: Aerial Drones, Combat Robotic Competitions, 3D printing & LEGO Wall. Art activities were also part of the space. The St. Pete Robot Show included art-themed pieces based around robots and technology.

The Florida Center was also home to the Florida State Fair Competitive Exhibits, School Exhibits, Arts & Crafts Contests, Hillsborough County Public Schools displays with a tribute to Black History Month showcase and multiple special performances each year. Our Creative Living competitions included horticulture, baking, food preservation, photography, fine art, sewing, needlework, quilting, crafts, woodwork, and technology.

Attached please find the Audit Report for the Florida State Fair Authority for the Fiscal Year ending June 30, 2023.

