



**Wilton Simpson**  
Commissioner of Agriculture



**Cheryl F. Flood**  
Chief Executive Officer

December 27, 2024

The Honorable Daniel Perez  
Speaker of the Florida House of Representatives  
420 The Capitol  
402 South Monroe Street  
Tallahassee, Florida 32399-1100

Dear Speaker Perez:

In compliance with Section 616.263, Florida Statutes, I am pleased to submit the attached Oversight Plan which contains the goals, objectives and accomplishments as established by my office for the Florida State Fair Authority for this past Fiscal Year 2023-2024. The Oversight Plan also outlines the newly established goals and objectives for the current fiscal year.

I am also transmitting the 2024 Annual Report of the Florida State Fair Authority, as well as details of some of this year's State Fair attractions!

We are pleased with the accomplishments made this past fiscal year. We look forward to continued improvements.

Sincerely,

Cheryl F. Flood  
Chief Executive Officer

CF/ws  
Enclosures

[www.FloridaStateFair.com](http://www.FloridaStateFair.com)

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# **FLORIDA STATE FAIR AUTHORITY**

## **2024 OVERSIGHT REPORT**

**FLORIDA**   
STATE FAIRGROUNDS

providing oversight supervision of the Florida State Fair Authority. The members and their designated terms of service were as follows:

**Membership December 31, 2024**

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

**December 31, 2024 Officers**

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



The Commissioner’s Executive Staff, working with management staff from the Florida State Fair Authority, established five (5) Goals/Objectives for Calendar Year **2024** as a guide for continuing to improve the Florida State Fair Authority and serve as a basic required plan for oversight.

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**GOALS/OBJECTIVES:**

1. Increase the revenue producing event days in 2024 to **500**. In addition, maintain the non-Fair revenue at over **\$6,700,000** despite significant one-time events in 2023 and a large number of concerts significantly increasing our camping revenue.

**ACCOMPLISHMENTS:**

The Fair Authority had only **387** revenue producing Event Days in 2024. Reduction came from 8 less concerts, the loss of 14 days from our two biggest Equestrian events, and 36 days lost due to Hurricane Milton. The Authority had to cancel or modify numerous events due to damage to our Expo Hall caused by Hurricane Milton. Fortunately, the Fair Authority had modified our approach and focused on larger events with less overall event days. Despite the lower number of event days, our non-Fair revenue still reached \$6,553,000.

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**GOALS/OBJECTIVES:**

2. During calendar year 2024 have a net increase of at least 5 new major events versus non-returning major events. Also have a net revenue increase on these events of at least **\$100,000** of additional revenue.

**ACCOMPLISHMENTS:**

The Fair Authority had **16** new major events booked versus **9** major events that were discontinued in 2024. Management strategically targeted more profitable events in 2024 resulting in a significant net increase in revenue of **\$254,000** with these major events.

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**GOALS/OBJECTIVES:**

3. Maintain our increases in the advance sales program for the 2024 Florida State Fair despite some headwinds in the economy.

**ACCOMPLISHMENTS:**

Advance online sales increased by 110% to \$780,000 for the 2024 Fair. Our partnership with Noise media and increased social media marketing were driving factors for this increase.

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**GOALS/OBJECTIVES:**

4. Successfully rebuild the State Fair Authority’s sponsorship revenue to **\$1,100,000** for calendar year 2024. This represents an 11% increase in revenue over 2022.



**ACCOMPLISHMENTS:**

Sponsorship revenue increased by approximately 8% over 2023 and fell slightly short of our goal. The sponsorship revenue of approximately \$1,060,000 was a strong increase as we continue to work to build our sponsorship base to higher levels.

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**GOALS/OBJECTIVES:**

5. The Florida State Fair Authority, in continuation of its implementation of its business plan, will emphasize the following capital-related projects (subject to adequate funding to complete these projects):
  - a. Construction of an IT & Security Office to move IT to a superior location and replace a deteriorating Security Office.
  - b. Flooring restoration in show buildings including grinding and re-coating of concrete floors.
  - c. Upgrade our utilities, pedestal, and roadways in our main campground. Our campgrounds are vital to our annual State Fair and year-round equestrian events.
  - d. Interior improvements to show buildings walls that includes upgrades and painting.
  - e. Exterior restroom renovations on Mall and Midway areas

**ACCOMPLISHMENTS:**

The Florida State Fair Authority was restricted in our ability to do capital projects in 2024 due to rain losses at the 2024 Fair and impacts from Hurricane Milton. The rain on the second weekend resulted in over a \$2,000,000 reduction in available funds to spend on capital projects. The revenue losses suffered from Hurricane Milton are expected to reach approximately \$1,000,000 when final calculations are completed. The Authority’s remaining funds have been reserved primarily for remediation of damages to our facility that were not covered by insurance.

- A. Construction of an IT & Security Office was delayed due to the unavailability of sufficient capital funds.
  - B. Flooring restoration was completed in the Special events center before our hurricane damage. The flooring in Expo Hall was damaged by Hurricane Milton and necessitated a more extensive restoration that was primarily covered by insurance. Entertainment Hall flooring has been delayed until 2025.
  - C. Campground upgrades were also delayed due to the unavailability of sufficient capital funds.
  - D. Most Interior upgrades were delayed due to Hurricane Milton.
  - E. Exterior restroom upgrades were completed in the calendar year 2024.
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The Commissioner’s Executive Staff and the Florida State Fair Authority’s Executive Staff established the following Goals/Objectives jointly for Calendar Year 2025.

1. Increase the revenue producing event days in calendar year 2025 to **430**. In addition, rebound from event losses caused by Hurricane Milton and increase the non-Fair revenue to over **\$7,000,000**.
2. During calendar year 2025, have a net increase of at least 5 new major events versus non-returning major events. Also have a net revenue increase on these events of at least **\$150,000** of additional revenue.
3. Continue our trend of increases in the advance sales program for the 2025 Florida State Fair with an additional 5% increase in pre-fair sales.
4. Achieve a significant jump in the State Fair Authority’s sponsorship revenue to **\$1,150,000** for calendar year 2025. This represents an 8.5% increase in revenue over 2024.
5. The Florida State Fair Authority, in continuation of its implementation of its business plan, will emphasize the following capital-related projects (subject to adequate funding to complete these projects):
  - A. Remediation of damage suffered by Hurricane Milton should exceed \$5 million, with over \$1.8 million in deductible costs to be funded by the Fair Authority. Approximately 60% of our damage was on our largest facility – Expo Hall.
  - B. Submit documentation to FEMA for reimbursement of most of our damages. Reimbursement of costs is not anticipated until at least 2026.
  - C. Construction of an IT & Security Office to move IT to a superior location and replace a deteriorating Security Office.
  - D. Upgrade our utilities, pedestal, and roadways in our main campground. Our campgrounds are vital to our annual State Fair and year-round equestrian events.
  - E. Continue to pursue State Funding for a new Chiller Complex to replace our 47-year-old Chiller in Expo and Entertainment Hall.

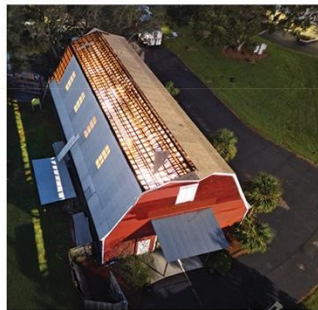
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## IMPACT OF HURRICANE MILTON

Expo Hall



Red Barn



Widespread Damage



## **FAIR RANKINGS**

The Florida State Fair continues to enjoy a strong presence within the North American Fair industry. The International Association of Fairs and Expositions (IAFE) collects data from IAFE member fairs and positions' the Fairs in accordance with the attendance that each responding fair submits. The 2024 Florida State fell to 48<sup>th</sup> in the top 50 rankings due to rain on the last weekend of the Fair. In 2023 the Florida State Fair was in the 41<sup>st</sup> position.

## **2024 FAIR ACTIVITIES**

The 119<sup>th</sup> Florida State Fair in 2024 saw Fair attendance decrease from 405,888 to 338,499 due to heavy rains on the last Saturday and Sunday of the Fair. Our second weekend is normally where the highest Fair attendance occurs. Our overall revenue for the 2024 Fair was our third lowest in the last 15 years and our net income was over \$2M under budget.

Despite the weather, our guests enjoyed their Fair visit as they checked out thrilling entertainment, delicious foods and exciting rides and exhibits. The Florida State Fair entertainment experience for 2024 included new performances from the Sea Lion Splash, Paul Bunyon Lumberjack show, Texas Trick Riders, and Rainforest Experience. The fair also added many local music acts, a Foam Zone for kids and "3D Chalk" art displays. In the Equestrian center, we brought back the fan favorite "Lawn Mower" races for two days of action-packed fun.

There were plenty of new and exciting foods available throughout the fairgrounds for guests to indulge on in their Florida State Fair experience. Our new "\$3 Thursday" allowed vendors 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.

Cracker Country Living History Museum (included with Fair Admission) 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 twenty-five period craft, cooking and life skills demonstrators and vendors. Musical entertainment featured bluegrass bands Southern Express and Bits of Grass.

Our Livestock events featured more than 5,000 animals to both entertain and 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 crowd favorites.

At the 2024 Fair, two new exhibits were added to the Ag Hall of Fame Building. First, the Florida Ag Hall of Fame Foundation with help from several Florida Commodity Groups developed a Hologram Experience "Time Travel Through Florida Agriculture." The hologram presentation played a total of 170 times during the 12-day run and fair-goers loved this state-of-the-art movie. "Thank a Florida Farmer" was also added to the Ag Hall of Fame Building. We partnered with the Florida Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services to develop this exhibit.

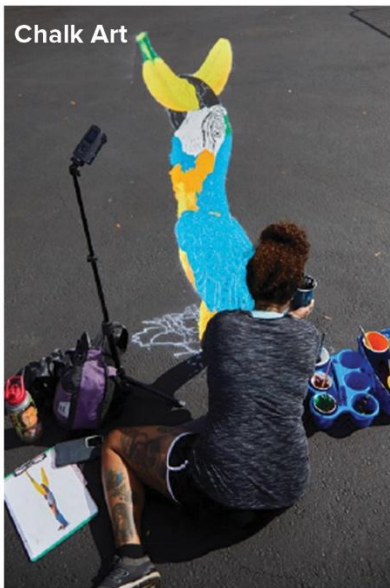


## 2024 FAIR ACTIVITIES-Continued

The Florida Center was home to the Florida State Fair Competitive Exhibits, School Exhibits, Arts & Crafts Contests, Hillsborough County Public Schools. Our Creative Living competitions included horticulture, baking, food preservation, photography, fine art, sewing, needlework, quilting, crafts, woodwork, and technology.

In 2024, Ag Mechanics was added to the Creative Living Building. 4-H, FFA and YLPA members could enter either wood or metal projects. This exhibit allowed students who might not be able to have a livestock project be able to participate. These projects were incredible and a fantastic way to showcase agriculture in the Florida Center.

Other unique offerings at the Florida State Fair included the “Florida’s Learning Garden” teaching guests how to care for a mature/established landscape and create a small-scale organic vegetable garden and much more. The “Little Farm Hands” kids, (ages 3-8) become farm hands at this free, hands-on exhibit. The Florida Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services presented the “Insect Encounter” that once again entertained patrons with bugs and other crawling creatures.



**SMILE TOGETHER**





**2025 FAIR PLANNING** - What follows is information pertinent to the upcoming Florida State Fair event, which will take place February 2025, at the Florida State Fair Authority's facilities in Tampa.

### **OVERVIEW**

The 2025 Florida State Fair follows 2024 Fair that was extremely successful for the first 9 days until heavy rain fell on last Saturday and Sunday, normally our highest attendance days. The impact from the rain severely impacted both total fair attendance and revenue. Our plan for 2025 is to utilize research insights to expand our marketing efforts to appeal to a broader audience with new entertainment, experiences, and promotions that appeal to both existing guests and new visitors. We will specifically target younger families and young adults and compete more aggressively for guests the first weekend and on Super Bowl Sunday.

### **GOALS & OBJECTIVES**

1. Grow 2025 attendance to exceed 475,000 visitors.
2. Deliver new offerings to delight existing fair fans and attract new fans.
3. Build community engagement to promote excitement and fair participation.
4. Leverage barrier research to build awareness, consideration, and trial with new segments.
5. Establish and promote a safety-first culture and experience for all.
6. Introduce fun elements to build the Florida State Fair brand.

### **2024 FAIR DAILY PROMOTIONS**

#### **Heroes Day – Thursday, Feb 6**

- Free admission for law enforcement, first responders, active or retired military and veterans with valid ID.

#### **Super Savings Sunday – Sunday, Feb 9**

- Free admission for law enforcement, first responders, active or retired military and veterans with valid ID.
- Free admission with purchase of an Anyday Armband after 3:00pm.

#### **\$3 Thursday – Thursday, Feb 13**

- \$3 admission, select rides, games, and food items after 3:00pm.

#### **Family Day – Friday, February 14**

- Persons 17 years of age or younger will receive free admission to the Florida State Fair until 6:00 p.m. with an admission paying parent or guardian, 21 years of age or older with a valid ID, for entry to the Florida State Fair.
- A parent or guardian can supervise up to 4 persons 17 years of age or younger.

#### **Kids Day – Monday, February 17**

- Persons 17 years of age or younger will receive free admission to the Florida State Fair until 6:00 p.m. with an admission paying parent or guardian, 21 years of age or older with a valid ID, for entry to the Florida State Fair.
- A parent or guardian can supervise up to 4 persons 17 years of age or younger.

#### **Senior Days – Any Monday – Friday of the fair**

- Admission is \$11 for seniors 55+ online or at the gate.



**Marketing Campaign:**

Florida State Fair Authority has been utilizing the Marketing Agency “PRESS” since 2018 to facilitate earned media coverage for the annual fair.

- A. PRESS will continue to boost awareness of the Florida State Fair and continue its legacy of being a fun and safe entertainment experience along with fulfilling its mission to educate the public about agriculture, crops, animals, and sustainable resources.
- B. PRESS understands the Fair customer and its target demographic and will create on-brand messaging, story angles and announcements to keep Florida State Fair as the place to spend a fun day with family, the perfect date night, or a great place to learn more about Florida.
- C. PRESS will meet with editorial boards to plan coverage and provide a framework for securing pre-fair media coverage. PRESS will then work to fill in gaps of coverage with topical, relevant, and interesting story angles to ensure consistent coverage throughout the contract.
- D. PRESS will also create branded and thoughtful media drops to announce the upcoming fair, its entertainment, and other fair highlights. PRESS will focus on pre-fair coverage to ensure broad awareness of fair and to free up spokespeople during fair time.
- E. PRESS will connect with the major departments of the Florida State Fair – agriculture, Cracker Country, food vendors, entertainment, Midway rides – to garner human-interest stories and ensure accurate information is provided to journalists in a timely manner.
- F. Pre-fair, PRESS will distribute strategically timed media updates to journalists in drivable distance to the Florida State Fair (Orlando, Jacksonville, Gainesville, Ft. Myers, and others). This tactic would begin in November through end of January.
- G. In February, regular and frequent updates to media will be provided. The updates will include potential story angles customized to the writer, newsworthy activities in the schedule of events and any additional information applicable to the writer.
- H. PRESS will also coordinate a media credential and access policy to allow for a PRESS representative escort when on the Florida State Fairgrounds.

The Florida State Fair Authority has engaged leading digital marketing agency, Noise New Media since 2022 to contemporize digital strategies to facilitate strong performance in all digital advertising channels for the annual fair. The mix reflects the increased investment in digital media as consistent with marketplace optimization.

**MEDIA MIX**

- TV/Cable – 32.0%
- Digital/Social, DR Ads – 34.5%
- Radio – 4.0%
- Out-of-Home – 25%
- Print – 4.5%

**COMMUNICATIONS**

- Broadcast TV
- Web, Social, Email campaigns
- Broadcast Radio
- Billboards
- Newspapers, Magazines



**CRACKER COUNTRY MUSEUM**

In 2024, Cracker Country was open for a total of 84 days. Public events included the Florida State Fair and Christmas in the Country. Other fall events, including Tall Tales of Old Florida, Museum Day, and 3 weeks of school field trip programs, were cancelled due to the effects of Hurricanes Helene and Milton. In the spring of 2024, Cracker Country hosted 10,393 elementary, Pre-K and homeschool field trip participants in the Rural Home Life School Tour, the pre-K and Kindergarten Long Ago and Today, Extended Day Field Trip and 2 homeschool events. In the fall we are on track to host over 11,245 elementary and homeschool students, parents and teachers in the Rural Home Life Tour, Extended Day Field Trips and two homeschool events.

During the 2024 Florida State Fair, Cracker Country featured music, crafts and demonstrations of 19<sup>th</sup> century trades and skills by historic educators and artisans. The museum also provided staff and docents to interpret the Florida Cattle Ranching exhibit, Florida Forest Discovery Center, Florida Wildlife Corridor “You Are Here” photography exhibit and the Power of Steam exhibit.

**EDUCATION/AGRICULTURE**

The Agribusiness Department at the Florida State Fair strives to expand its educational programs each year. The “Youth Livestock Show Ethics and Animal Care Workshop” program continues to grow as the Authority offers this program to any Fair in Florida. Through the Agribusiness website, our department schedules and posts times and locations, tracks the attendance of exhibitors for issuing certification numbers, processes mailings and offers our exhibitors the ability to check their Ethics certification. This program was developed through the cooperation of the University of Florida, the Florida State Fair Authority, and Florida Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services. For the 2024/2025 Fair Season, we have been offering both On-Site Workshops and Zoom Meeting Workshops for new exhibitors or anyone who needed to renew. So far this year, we have scheduled seventy-two workshops for students to attend and plan to keep scheduling until we make sure exhibitors have the information.

The Authority’s “Ag Venture” program at the Fairgrounds continues to grow and we are thrilled this program has been able to return for the Fall of 2024 and Spring of 20243. We have been able to add a Homeschool Day to our Fall tours which has been wonderful since we are reaching a different group of students and parents. Unfortunately, our Fall Ag-Venture was cut short due to Hurricane Helena. Our Educational Seminar happened again in September. We continued with the revised format to give the students more room. We did five workshops in the morning, the 1<sup>st</sup> Orientation during the lunch break and five more workshops in the afternoon. Everyone has really liked this format since they had to be on the fairgrounds for a shorter period of time. We were thrilled with the turnout!!

The Authority will continue to be involved in the following events:

1. Florida Federation of Fairs Workshop	2. Cattlemen’s Convention
3. Florida Ag In the Classroom	4. State FFA Convention Trade Show
5. Florida Federation of Fairs Convention	

## FACILITIES & EQUIPMENT

Numerous major Capital projects were completed in 2024 including the following essential items:

- A. Renovation of six freestanding bathroom facilities throughout the fairgrounds. The facilities were old and outdated and badly in need of a remodel.
- B. Major upgrades to water/sewer infrastructure at the fairgrounds.
- C. Renovations to our main concession stands. Upgrades include both the structure and equipment at our stands.
- D. New signage at our major gates. Our prior signage was unreliable and outdated.
- E. Investment in an 85' boom-lift to significantly reduce rental costs and increase the productivity of our staff.
- F. Purchase of kiosk stations for midway sales. Kiosks increase our efficiency and reduce our payroll expenses.



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STATE FAIRGROUNDS

