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Keeping the sweet scent of country alive

By IRENE GENTLE

The Champion

Size counts. At least it does when it comes to some of the agricultural contests held at the 146th annual Fall Fair.

The fair will be held Friday through Sunday, Sept. 24-26 at the Milton Fair Grounds.

The event gives farmers and backyard gardeners alike the opportunity to go head to head over who has the biggest pumpkin or zucchini.

And bigger is better when it comes to attendance numbers, too.

Last year, 16,000 visitors came out for the fair.

But the Halton Agricultural Society (HAS) is hoping to increase that by some 4,000 for its last fair of the millennium.

To commemorate the occasion, a souvenir t-shirt has been designed that shows a cow with the words "Moooooving to the new Millennium."

But swollen crowds are largely contingent on sunny skies, sighed Marilyn Gooding of the HAS.

Tried and true

"It is very weather dependent," she said. "Our numbers were down a little last year because it looked as though it would rain all Sunday."

Whatever Mother Nature throws at it, the fair has managed to keep its numbers steady over the years by offering the tried and true small town attractions.

That means live music and comedy, midway rides, games, horse shows, truck pulls and demolition derbies.

It also means appearances by the newly crowned Milton Fair ambassador, Carrie Roberts.

"It is a combination of old things and new things," said Ms Gooding. "Fairs are unique. You can't go other places and see everything you can see here in one place."

New this year at the fair is a Pit Stop Racing Competition.

Held throughout the weekend, the event calls for teams to navigate a soap box car through a course in the fastest time possible.

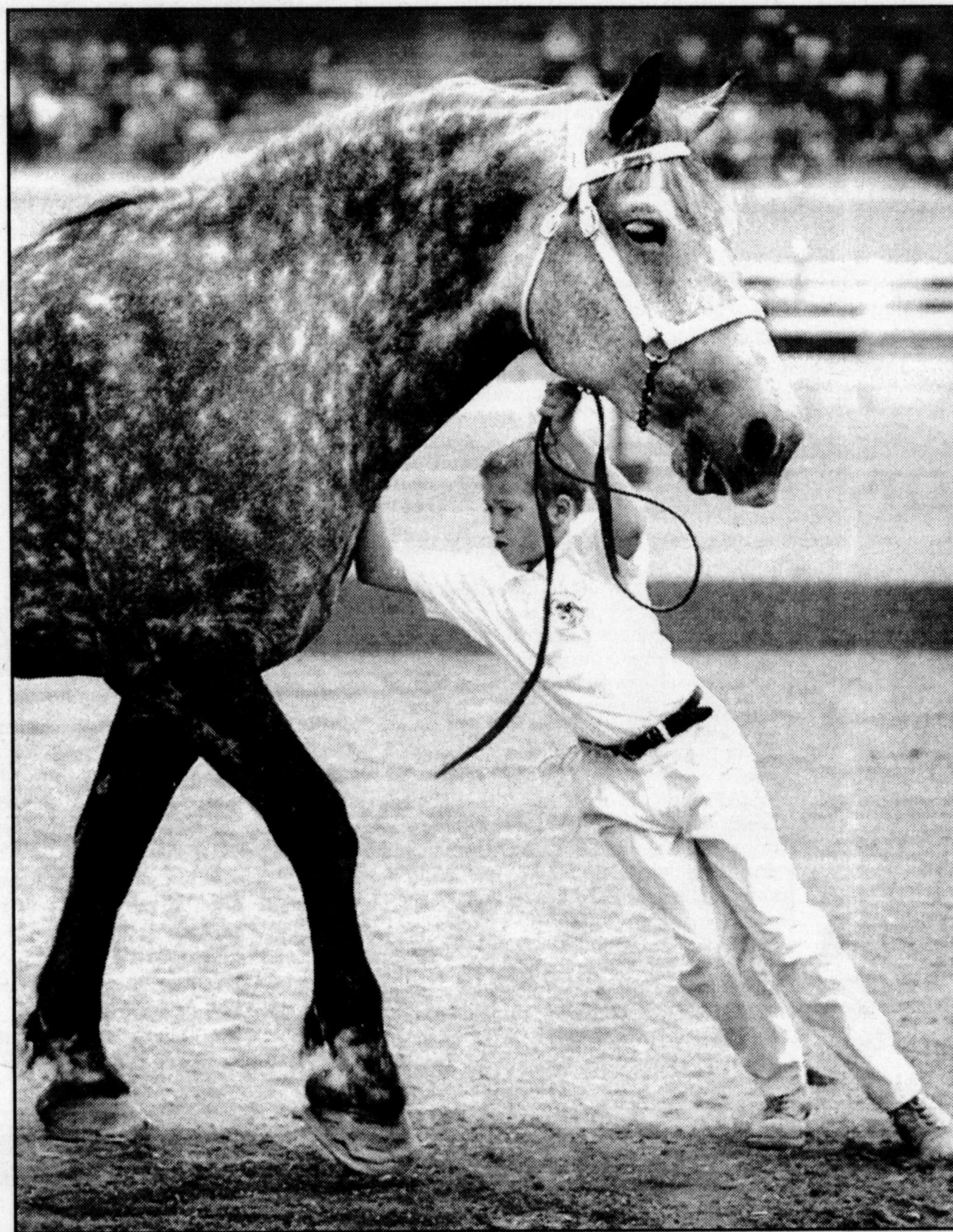
That includes a speedy tire rotation.

But mostly, the fair attempts to stay true to Milton's deeply-planted agricultural roots, said Ms Gooding.

"The fair started out as agricultural and people still come back to see that," she said. "That's a real draw."

But even in a town that mixes up the urban with the rural, agricultural messages can be lost.

It is a trend that seems destined to continue as Milton undergoes its anticipated population



File photo by GRAHAM PAINE

Pat Stokes had his hands full with this Percheron during a heavy horse competition at last year's fair.

boom.

Then, the fair will become even more essential as a link to the town's past, predicted Ms Gooding.

Come from all over

"I think it will make it more valuable because there isn't an opportunity to get to a farm," she said. "I don't think most kids know what they're missing."

If they don't, taking in the displays at the fair could give them a hint.

These days, the event serves about as many out of towners as it does locals.

Especially since Oakville, Mississauga, and Burlington don't offer fall fairs of their own.

And the Milton fair is designed to have something for everyone, from small children to the elderly, said Ms Gooding.

"We get a total cross-section of the population," she said.

This year the fair will be serving up entertaining fare such as kiddie performers The Stylamanders.

Former juggling champion Bob Cates will be on hand to showcase his 'comedy in motion' act.

And warming up the crowd before the widely anticipated demolition derby will be country kickers Southern Reign.

Dual demo derbies

They'll hit the grandstand at 6 p.m. Saturday and 1 p.m. Sunday.

The derbies will roar into action at 8 p.m. Saturday and 3 p.m. Sunday.

The adrenaline-charged event that turns mangling cars into a good thing is probably the most popular of all the fair's offerings, said Ms Gooding.

"The derby is a real big draw now. A lot of people come out to see that," she said. "That is our biggest crowd." Thrill-seekers who want to take a turn behind the wheel can still pick up derby entry forms at the fairground office.

And forms for the agricultural competitions can also be snapped up at the office, but all entries must be in by Thursday, September 23 at 11 a.m., warned Ms Gooding.

The whole event kicks off Friday with its education day.

About 2,000 schoolchildren are expected to turn out for a dazzling day of demonstrations.

Everything from sheep-shearing and cow milking to blacksmithing is on the agenda.

The fair office, 878-5689, opens Mondays and Wednesdays from 9-11:30 a.m. and 12:30-4 p.m.

Fall colours

The breathtaking autumn splendor makes the Thanksgiving weekend (October 9-10) a perfect time to visit Crawford Lake.

That's when the local conservation area holds its annual Autumn on the Escarpment Festival — a great opportunity to enjoy fabulous fall colours and many exciting activities.

Visitors are welcome to stroll the boardwalk and hiking trails or take a more leisurely horse drawn wagon ride through the picturesque woodlands.

Children are sure to enjoy a host of activities including Native games and challenges such as an Autumn Discovery Hunt.

And as always, the 15th century reconstructed Iroquoian Village is a fascinating place to visit and learn about Ontario's First People and their way of life.

Admission for this special event is \$5 per person, with children under four free. Crawford Lake is off Guelph Line just south of Campbellville.

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Cableworks 14 Programming Schedule — September 21 - 27, 1999

Tuesday, September 21st	Wednesday, September 22nd	Thursday, September 23rd	Saturday, September 25th	Monday, September 27th
5:30, 6:30, 7:30pm Plugged In!	5:30, 6:30, 7:30pm Plugged In!	5:30, 6:30, 7:30pm Plugged In!	8:00pm Milton Demo Derby - Live from the Fall Fair!	5:30, 6:30, 7:30pm Plugged In!
6:00pm Down To Earth	6:00pm Hands Up Puppeteers	6:00pm Hands Up Puppeteers		6:00pm Cable in the Classroom
7:00pm Classics Against Cancer	7:00pm The Garden Tour	7:00pm The Garden Tour		7:00pm Internet 101
8:00pm Halton Hills Council	8:00pm Milton Council	8:00pm Milton Council		

Feature of the week: Milton Demo Derby - Live from the Fall Fair! - Saturday 8pm

T a k i n g y o u r c a b l e f u r t h e r