

Taking care of the business of the fair

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Although it might seem that the world turns on a dollar, the real essence of the Markham Fair organization is its commitment to the community and not to making money.

"We're a business dedicated to the community," affirmed David Morrison, Manager of the Markham Fair.

The Markham Fair and its fairgrounds is actually owned and operated by The Markham and East York Agricultural Society, a non-profit corporation which began in 1844 and functions under the Ministry of Agriculture.

"We receive some grant money from the Federal and Provincial government in recognition that the fair is a promotion of agriculture and excellence through competition," said Morrison, "but, it is not a lot of money, nor a key factor in our operation for a fair this size. The only real source of revenue is from paid admissions and from the concessionaires."

It costs a lot to run the fair - almost \$700,000 in fact - but, regardless of the income, the money always goes back into the fair.

**WEATHER:
FRIEND OR FOE**

Morrison noted that "weather is a big factor and if it is bad, then we might have some red ink but if it is good, then we can have a profit."

Some of that profit goes to support the Markham community. "We support baseball and hockey teams, the hospital and quite a few youth sports groups. It's a way for us to reach into the community on a year round basis," he said.

Another way in which the fair reaches into the community is through the many service clubs that use the Fair as a forum to service the community.

"I think it's fair to say that almost every service club within a 30 mile radius is represented at the fair," said Morrison. "The prime clubs, such as the Lions, the Kinsmen and the Rotary, all have permanent facilities at the fairgrounds and it's worthy of note that when people buy a hamburger from the Lion's Club, for example, the money goes directly back into the community."

50 TO 60 EVENTS A YEAR

Although the fair is the only event that the Markham and East York Agricultural Society actually runs, there are still close to 50 or 60 events a year that take place on the fairgrounds.

"Our mandate, in the broad sense, is to improve the quality of life in the community so, as things come up, we look at them and assess if they would be good for the community," said Morrison. "A lot of people would be amazed at the impact that the Markham Fair facility has on the community. For instance, the Snowmobile Show, which comes up after the fair, is the world's largest. As a result, literally every hotel in town is full. There are many people from out-of-town representing winter lodges who come to this

Running the Markham Fair and the fairgrounds is a major endeavour with a true community spirit

show and they generate income for all of Markham."

In spite of being handicapped geographically by its proximity to the many attractions around Toronto, the Markham Fair is still the largest four day fair in Ontario,

attracting nearly 80,000 people. It takes a lot of people to make a fair this size work and many people would be surprised to learn that almost all of the people working at the fair are unpaid. "The real strength of our organization is our

volunteers," said Morrison. "People are often unaware that we're the largest non-profit-based volunteer organization in Canada with over 500 volunteers in over 70 committees. If you analyze that, it's an enormous cross-section of

the fiber of our community. When you get that many people, it reflects strongly on what we are, what we do and what Markham is."

Morrison concluded by saying, "The fair is a good wholesome fair that features everything with an old country flavour. Parking is free, the food and entertainment are great, the rates are good and everyone is welcomed here. For a dollar value, there's nothing comparable."

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- | | |
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| 2. Dog with shortest tail | 9. Rabbit with shortest tail |
| 3. Dog with longest ears | 10. Rabbit with longest ears |
| 4. Dog with longest tail | 11. Best farm pet |
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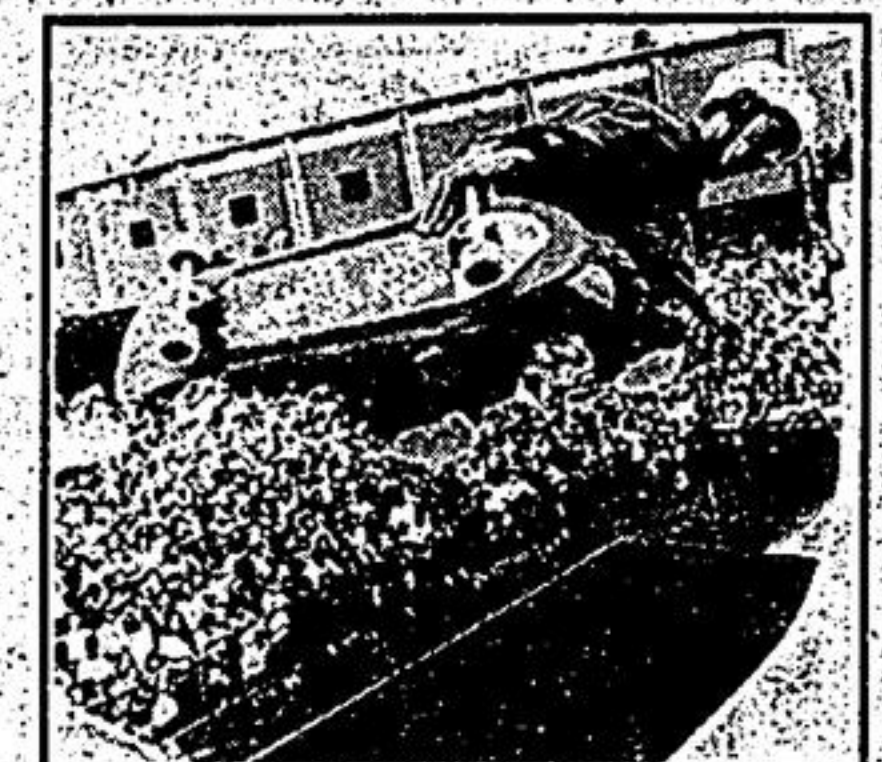
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