

Three women vying for 'Fairest of the Fair'

By Lydia Statz, Union staff writer | Posted: Tuesday, July 8, 2014 8:58 am

JEFFERSON — Three young women this summer are competing for the title of Jefferson County Fairest of the Fair.

Cierra Ehrke-Essock of Fort Atkinson, Olivia Peter of Lake Mills and Morgan Stendel of Sullivan will be judged on professionalism, poise, personality and pride as they compete this week for the public relations position to represent the Jefferson County Fair in one of its most visible positions.

Though the competition is a longstanding tradition, this year's contest will be the first under a new format. In the past, the year's contest has crowned its champion on the first day of the fair, and the winner has reigned over the remainder of the week at the fairgrounds.

However, this year's winner will be crowned on Sunday, during the last of the fair's five-day run, and the winner will return to reign over the 2015 Jefferson County Fair.

Fair Park Director David Diestler said the extended schedule offers a better opportunity to prepare the winner to represent the county later on.

"It used to be the same year that we picked the Fairest she would go to the state-level competition, but now it's a year lag," Diestler said. "So they get that experience, and they get to go to the state convention and see how that all goes, and, hopefully, they are better prepared when it's their turn to come back around and actually run for the Fairest of the Fair on the state level."

The Jefferson County Fairest of the Fair competition is filled with interviews, radio commercials, parades, the fair itself and a chance to earn the title of State Fairest of the Fair when the winner goes on to compete at the Annual Wisconsin Association of Fairs Convention in January.

The 2013 Jefferson County Fairest of the Fair winner, Caitlyn Gerlach of Palmyra, will compete for the county at that convention in January, while the new 2015 Fairest will attend the convention as a fair representative to experience the entire fair industry process while gaining knowledge to better serve Jefferson County and the future



FAIREST OF THE FAIR

FAIREST OF THE FAIR — With a little glitz, a bit of glam and a big desire to represent Jefferson County, three young women are competing to be crowned "Fairest of the Fair." In the competition, contestants are evaluated on professional appearance, community activities, personality, poise, fair knowledge and experience, speaking ability, their written application, the personal interview and a radio commercial. The 2015 Jefferson County Fairest of the Fair will be selected on Sunday, July 13, at 12:30 p.m. on the grandstand stage. Shown above right are Fairest of the Fair contestants Morgan Stendel of Sullivan, Cierra Ehrke-Essock of Fort Atkinson and Olivia Peter of Lake Mills.

of the county fair.

The 2015 Fairest of the Fair also will represent Jefferson County at the 2015 Wisconsin Association of Fairs convention in Wisconsin Dells.

By putting off their competition for a year, county fair officials can take a greater part in preparing the girls in hopes of a better return.

“We help train them,” Diestler said. “We have volunteers who come in, and ask them questions and things like that similar to what they’ll face at the state-level.

“So they can kind of start thinking that way, and it just kind of prepares them a little bit more,” he added. “I think it’s a better learning experience for everybody because you get a better idea of what really happens and you don’t have that deer-in-the-headlights look ... Otherwise they’re kind of going in blind, because when else do they get to kind of know that stuff?”

Both Gerlach and this year’s winner also will go to the State Fair in August to represent the Jefferson County Fair.

Meanwhile, all three contestants will help promote and represent the fair for the entire five-day run that kicks off Wednesday.

This year’s Fairest of the Fair season began with the Jefferson County Dairy Breakfast where the three contestants passed out brochures and met with the crowd attending the Fair Park event. Events such as that, prior to the fair, offer an opportunity for this year’s judges — Trent Topel, an area businessman from Cambridge; Yvonne Habermann, a returning judge back from a few years’ break; and Staci Hoffman, Jefferson County register of deeds — to meet the contestants.

In the competition, contestants are evaluated on professional appearance, community activities, personality, poise, fair knowledge and experience, speaking ability, their written application, the personal interview and radio commercial.

Final selection will be made by the judges on Sunday, July 13, at the fair. At 10:30 a.m. on the Activity Center stage, each contestant will be asked a final question, and the crowning will take place at 12:30 p.m.

The following are the three contestants:

Cierra Ehrke-Essock

Cierra Ehrke-Essock, from Fort Atkinson, currently is attending the University of Wisconsin-River Falls and studying agriculture education.

On her application, she stated, “To be Fairest of the Fair for Jefferson County would be a great honor. The county fair is much more than just food and entertainment. It’s about celebrating the businesses of our county and, more importantly, educating the public about our local agriculture.

“I am an advocate for agriculture,” Ehrke-Essock added, “and this position would give me the opportunity to speak about my passion.”

Olivia Peter

Lake Mills resident Olivia Peter is attending the University of Wisconsin-Madison and majoring in dairy science.

Peter said she would was joining the competition because, "Being Fairest of the Fair would mean being an advocate not only for agriculture but personal development. 4-H offers so many opportunities for everyone.

"I would continue to promote our fair through encouraging children to join 4-H, and others in the community to come see and appreciate all their hard work at the Jefferson County Fair while getting to enjoy delicious food and great entertainment," she added.

Morgan Stendel

Morgan Stendel lives in Sullivan and graduated from Jefferson High School. She will attend Madison Area Technical College to study early childhood education.

She indicated the reason that she wanted to be crowned Fairest was to share her love for agriculture and promote Jefferson County.

"4-H and FFA have shaped me into the person I am today, and formed a leader in me," Stendel wrote. "Being the Fairest of the Fair would mean fulfilling a lifelong goal of being a role model and setting examples. It would mean promoting Jefferson County, and sharing what it all has to offer."