

Open, senior class fair entry registration only online

By Alexa Zoellner Union staff writer | Posted: Thursday, June 11, 2015 9:57 am

JEFFERSON — The 163rd annual Jefferson County Fair is a month away, and entries for open and senior class exhibits are due Monday, June 15. This year, however, registration is being done differently than in the past — everyone must sign up online.

“We’re using the same program we’ve used for years, but we added this new function to it to be able to do online entries,” Jefferson County Fair Park director David Diestler said.

Diestler cited several reasons for transitioning from a paper to an online process, including a reduction in mistakes such as duplicate and incorrect entries and saving time. He described the system as “handier” and more customer friendly.

“This way, (exhibitors) have control of their own account. They can decide which category they want to go into,” Diestler said. “There’s less chance of us making a mistake and allowing them to control what they want to enter.”

Fair Park marketing and administrative assistant Amy Listle noted that other neighboring counties have gone online in recent years.

“Rock County and Jefferson County — this is our first year doing online entries,” Listle said. “Basically every county that surrounds us has been doing online entries for years. We’re like the last ones.”

As a whole, the Fair Park is trying to “modernize and come into the 21st century,” commented Diestler.

Also new this year is a \$2 one-time entry fee for open and senior entries. If entering projects in both classes, the fee is \$4.

“Everyone has to pay an entry fee,” said Listle, adding that animal exhibitors have an additional pen or stall fee associated with each animal.

The fee must be paid online with a Visa, MasterCard or Discover credit or debit card. Pre-paid Visa or MasterCards also are accepted. No cash or checks will be accepted.

“The online system has to be credit card. You have to pay online,” Listle said. “We don’t have the option of (taking some cash payments and others online). Unfortunately, that is part of the software program that we actually have been using for a long time and now that’s transitioning too.”

Listle said that if using a pre-paid card, fair entrants must make sure to register an address with the card because the credit card system has to match up the billing address.



Online fair signup

Amy Listle and Bryce Krull process online Jefferson County Fair entries. This marks the first year that all junior, open and senior class fair entrants must sign up their projects online.

The online entry process takes anywhere from 10 to 15 minutes, according to Listle. The entry form can be found on the fairgrounds' website at <http://www.jcfairpark.com>.

"Each exhibitor has to create their own account and then they would register their own entries," Listle said.

Required fields to create an account include division, first and last name, full address, telephone number, an email address, birth date, age, gender, a username, a password and a security question.

Once the account is set up, entrants simply follow the directions provided and then add the categories in which they wish to compete. After all entries have been registered, entrants click "Submit Entries" and they are directed through to the billing page.

"By doing the online system, if they create an account and have a username and password, they can just log right back in, continue to add more entries before the deadline," said Listle.

She added that if anyone needs help registering, there are always one or two computers available at the fair office and someone would be happy to help guide participants through the process.

"We've stayed late to help people register. If they call us and say 'can somebody stay today?' (and) if we're available and can do it, we've done it," said Listle. "We want to help them sign up. We've tried to give them a lot of options on how to do that."

Diestler agreed.

"We're always open to help people if they need help with the online entries and stuff like that," Diestler said. "We'll train them, sit by them, help them log in what they need to register."

Both Diestler and Listle said they believe that the overall reaction to going online has been mainly positive.

"There's been a lot of questions about how's this going to work, how do we do this — a lot of clubs were wondering how to enter because they enter the whole club," Diestler said, referring to 4-H clubs and other youth organizations, whose registration deadline was May 15. "So once we worked through those questions and solved the answers to them, then it became pretty easy and from what we understand it's been a lot easier for them."

However, not everyone shares their enthusiasm over the new online registration.

Pat Gogin, the previous superintendent of the open and senior classes, said she is less than pleased with the changes made.

"I'm not happy with the way they're doing things this year at all," said Gogin. "This should have been a trial and error this year. Let people know that starting next year, we will be doing a new system. Nobody got forewarned of this at all."

Gogin usually enters the knitting, crocheting and embroidery categories at the fair, but she said that because online registration is the sole option, she will not be participating this year.

Her computer is broken and she has been unable to access the fair website on either of her tablets. Gogin also expressed concerns regarding the security of the website should she enter her credit card information.

Another longtime open class participant, who asked to remain anonymous, also was upset about the changes.

“I was very angry. Very upset. Deeply offended,” she said. “Suddenly I was no longer eligible to enter the fair.”

For the last nine years, she has entered the open class photography category, but this year, she doesn't plan on going to the fair at all.

“All of this time and work getting ready and now where am I? Pictures are enlarged, framed,” she said. “Money I didn't need to spend on it.”

She said that online registration would be fine, so long as email was optional and people had the choice to either pay online or when they pick up their fair ticket.

“Leave those two points open and online is fine,” she said.

Both women pointed out that pre-paid cards require an activation fee. They also noted that many people don't have or want to use credit cards, an email account or even a computer.

“We're going to lose a lot of people,” Gogin said of open and senior class fair participants. “I know the entries are down; I know that part.”

The Jefferson County Fair will take place July 8-12. The theme this year, which was chosen via a public vote, is the “Year of the Cheese.”

Persons with questions about the fair or registration may contact the fair office weekdays between 8 a.m. and 4:30 p.m. The telephone number is (920) 674-7148.

A direct link to the fair entry form is: <https://www.blueribbonfair.com/BRFairProd/BlueRibbonStart.aspx?ID=1302>.