



OFFICIAL PROGRAM

*A Special Publication of
the Addison Independent*



ADDISON COUNTY FAIR & FIELD DAYS

TUESDAY, AUGUST 4 - SATURDAY, AUGUST 8, 2026



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Welcome

The Addison County Fair & Field Days Board extends a cordial invitation to you, your friends and your family to enjoy this year's Fair on Aug. 4-8, 2026. It is our pleasure to present the opportunity to see a wide variety of fun and informative displays about life here in the Champlain Valley — with an emphasis of our agricultural heritage. As such, check out how area citizens are showcasing the quality products they have produced. And see, taste and smell all the other great things Addison Country Fair and Field Days has to offer, as well.

We extend our sincere appreciation to all our guests, and to everyone who visits, exhibits and takes part in Field Days, and we look forward to seeing you at our 2026 fair.

Addison County Fair & Field Days, Inc.

New Haven, VT 05742

802-545-2557 (Phone) 802-329-2113 (Fax)

FieldDays@gmavt.net

Visit us at AddisonCountyFieldDays.com

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About this Field Days Program

Addison County Fair and Field Days draws folks from around the county and around the state to the fairgrounds in New Haven every August. The fair pulls in more people than any other event in Addison County. The best farmers, sugarmakers, cooks, bakers, gardeners and all kinds of craftmakers compete for bragging rights — as do those brave men and women who get behind the wheel in the demolition derby and the tractor pull (not to mention the folks who work with the powerful draft horses). And don't forget Wednesday's skillet toss.

More often than not, the winners turn out to be our neighbors, or the folks down the road whom we see at the grocery store, the cream stand or our kids' school concerts.

Kids with cows, calves, sheep, lambs — livestock of all kinds — work for weeks and months leading up to the fair, grooming their animals for show-ring competition. Adults compete for the coveted Leona Thompson Bowl. Younger crafters try to earn the Frances Monroe Youth Award.

Contestants young and old — and every age between — gather fruits and vegetables from the garden and sugar and spices from the pantry; then whip them up into a smorgasbord of jams, pickles, cakes and cookies for competitions in the Food Department.

There are exhibits, pulls (tractor, truck, horse, oxen and pedal-tractor), animal judging, horse shows, carnival food by the ton and plenty of midway rides.

This booklet, which is filled with photographs taken at last year's fair, is designed to serve as a guide to Field Days. A complete schedule of events can be found here as well as profiles of this year's entertainers.

Entertainment at the fair comes not just in the form of bands, dancers and a popular magician, but also includes the ever-popular armwrestling. The popular karaoke contest returns, as does Line Dancing.

There is plenty to see and do over the five days of the fair — Aug. 4-8. Go out and see ALL of it!

Message to Superintendents

The *Addison Independent* will publish the results of as many Field Days competitions as we can get our hands on. Event superintendents should take their results to the Field Days office immediately after the events. Field Days staff will make copies and the *Independent* will publish the information as quickly as possible.

Thank you!



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2026 Admission

Your ticket price includes parking, gate admission, re-admission, grandstands, and all Field Days shows and exhibits. Ticket office opens at 7:30 a.m.

ADULTS (ages 12 and over)

Tuesday–Friday Admission	\$15
Saturday Admission.....	\$20
SEASON PASS	\$60
SENIOR DISCOUNT	Free on Tuesday with Green Mountain Passport (Green Mtn Passports can be purchased at your local Town Clerk's office)

CHILDREN (ages 6-11)

Daily Admission	\$5
SEASON PASS	\$20

CHILDREN (5 years and under)

FREE all days

RIDE BRACELET – Good for ALL day \$25

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Buy a \$25 bracelet and it is good for rides all day.

Otherwise there is a price for each individual ride.

Go to www.dreamlandamusements.com for pre-fair-special deals.

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2026 Dedication



Anthony "Tony" Neri

This year the Addison County Fair and Field Days Board of Directors is dedicating this book to longtime concessionaire Anthony "Tony" Neri. Tony passed away February 24, 2026, and will be greatly missed at Field Days.

Tony began his Field Days career in 1972 with Tony's Pizza and Mamma's Meatballs, running the arcade, and serving up his legendary Hot Italian Sausage. These three concessions have become a family affair and are surely to be carried on by the successive generations. We learned that after a successful season, their family would relax from all the hard work with Disney and fishing on Marco Island. Who wouldn't love Field Days with that reward to look forward to!

Tony instilled such love for Field Days in his family that his son, Anthony, has taken on providing the meals in the Dining Hall and is our go-to PA system guy during the fair.

We can always build our exhibitor placement around Tony's permanent buildings, spacing out those with similar foods around where we know we will have Tony's pizza and sausage every year.

The arcade is still a hit with teenagers, and many parents have found theirs in this special space, safely whiling away the hours. Knowing it is such a popular spot, the arcade is always one of the first places we look when a child comes up "missing." And speaking of popularity, we know there are fairgoers who have not had their fill of fair food without one of Tony's sausages and there are directors that consider Field Days incomplete without one.

We appreciate the longevity of these family-run concessions started and operated by Tony Neri and will greatly miss seeing Tony and his familiar red truck on a daily basis throughout the fair.



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2026 Daily Activities

Please Note: Most Exhibits will be removed by 10 p.m. Saturday night.

Daily Maple Products Demo (Maple Sugarhouse)

9 a.m.–9 p.m.

Maple Sugar House Open

10 a.m.–10 p.m.

4-H & Youth Building Open

Antique Equipment Building Open

Children's Barnyard Open

Forest Festival Exhibits & Demonstrations (Forestry Building)

Home & Garden Building Open with continuous craft demos

Lucien Paquette Exhibit Building Open

10 a.m.–6 p.m.

Twist O' Wool Guild Demos (Twist O'Wool Guild tent)

NEW Chain Saw Artist Demonstrations

11 a.m.–8 p.m.

NEW Free Mini Golf

12 noon–12 midnight

Midway Open (approximately)

1 p.m.–4 p.m.

Milking Parlor Demonstrations

Play mini golf at the fair

By BEE ECKELS

NEW HAVEN — It's mini golf on the go! Don't forget to stop by the portable mini golf course, located in between the large concert tent and the midway at the Addison County Fair and Field Days — if you don't make it then you might be missing a tee-rific time.

The Portable Mini Golf Company (PMGC) first came to Field Days in 2025, and it's returning this year and it is bringing its A-game.

"We are based in Essex, so we have done the Chittenden County Fair before," a PMGC employee said. "But this is our first time here."

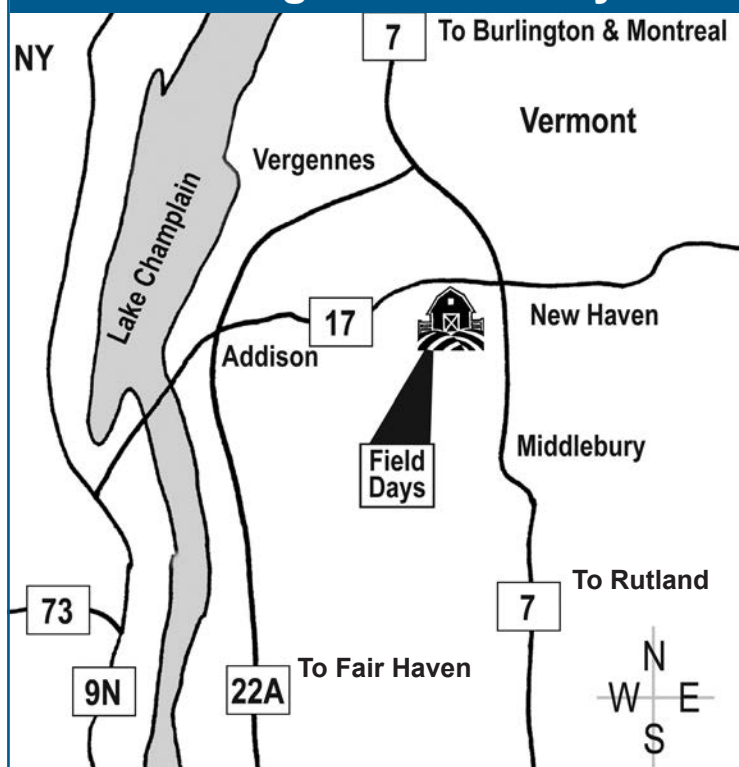
With a total of 18 holes — all hand-made by PMGC owner and founder Peter Miller — available

for fair-goers to use for free, there is a high chance you will have large amounts of fun, even when playing on a miniature level. These holes include unique and challenging obstacles. Last year PMGC set up holes with towers, windmills, picnic tables, ramps and zig-zagging turf patterns. Miller has produce more than 75 different mini golf holes.

While Field Days is only hosting 18 holes, private events that book PMGC can rent anywhere from nine to 36 holes.

Who would think you would go to the fairgrounds to play golf? This year plan to play a round of mini golf with your family and friends on your way to check out the rides or the demo derby. Putter late than never!

How to get to Field Days



A GROUP OF camp kids play a quick round of mini golf at the Addison County Fairgrounds in 2025. The golf course, provided by the Portable Mini Golf Company of Essex, returns to Field Days this year.

Independent file photo/Bee Eckels



Schedule of Events

Tuesday, August 4

Morning

- 8:30..... Western Only 4-H and Open Youth Junior Horse Show (horse area)
 9:00..... 4-H Dairy Conformation Classes (animal show arena)
 10:30..... Antique Equipment Demos (antique equipment area)
 10:30..... Blocking & Fitting Clinic - Sheep Tent
 10:30..... Wheels of Ag Tractor Trivia - Strolling Game Show
 10:30..... Pete & Chris Amusements (show tent)
 11:00..... Tom Joyce, The Magic Man (bandstand)

Afternoon

- Noon..... Dig for Treasure! (youth activity area) - FREE
 Noon..... Pirate Man Dan (show tent)
 Noon..... Wheels of Ag Game Show (dairy area)
 1:00..... Midway Opens (approximately) \$25 all day ride bracelets
 1-5 Children's Activities (children's barnyard area) - FREE
 1:30..... Antique Equipment Demo (antique equipment area)

- 1:30..... 4-H Hands-on Workshop (4-H exhibit building)
 1:30..... Pete & Chris Amusements (show tent)
 2:00..... Sheep Shearing/Handling Demonstration (sheep tent)
 3:00..... Pirate Man Dan (show tent)
 3:00..... Antique Equipment Demos (antique equipment area)
 3:00..... Sheep Blocking and Fitting Contest (sheep area)
 3:00..... Wheels of Ag Game Show (dairy area)
 3:30..... 4-H Hands-on Workshop (4-H exhibit building)
 3:30..... Tom Joyce, The Magic Man (bandstand)
 4:00..... Slate Valley Raceway RC Dirt race cars (Butterfield Arena)
 4:30..... Pete & Chris Amusements (show tent)
 5:00..... Gymkhana (horse area)
 5:15..... Vermont Products Dinner-1st Seating (dining hall)
 5:30..... Wheels of Ag Game Show (dairy area)
 5:45..... Power Wheel Derby (tractor pad)
 6:00..... Vermont Products Dinner-2nd Seating (dining hall)
 6:00..... Field Days Opening Celebration. Theme: "Country Nights, Carnival Lights"

(See Schedule of Events on page 13)

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 • Kinney Drugs
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 • Middlebury Discount Beverage
 • Middlebury Natural Foods Co-op

• Otter Creek Bakery
 • Rosie's
 • Shaw's
 • Stewart's Shop
 • Stone Mill Public Market
 • Vermont Book Shop
 • Vermont's Own
 • Village Depot
 • Walgreen's

NEW HAVEN:
 • Village Green Market
 • Rivers Bend Campground (seasonal)

N. FERRISBURGH:
 • Stewart's Shop
 • Russell Memorial Library

ORWELL:
 • Orwell Free Library

RIPTON:
 • Ripton Country Store

SALISBURY:
 • Kampersville Store (seasonal)

SHOREHAM:
 • Shoreham Service Center

STARKEBORO:
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Field Days Grounds Map

1. Kelly James Natural Resources Pavilion

2. Public Safety Building

3. Dusty Chuck 4-H Food Booth

4. 4-H Exhibit Building

5. Youth Food Booth

6. Field Days Main Office

7. Milking Parlor
& Dairy Bar

8. Dairy Palace Arena

9. Bandstand

10. Twist O' Wool Guild Tent

11. Pavilion

12. Show Tent

13. Handmowing Area

14. Lucien D. Paquette Exhibit Building

15. Horse Area Manager's Booth

16. 4-H Dairy Barn

17. Open Dairy Show Barn

18. Beef Cattle Tent

19. Antique Equipment Buildings

20. Show Area

21. Frances Monroe Home
& Garden Center

22. Sara McCarty Children's
Barnyard

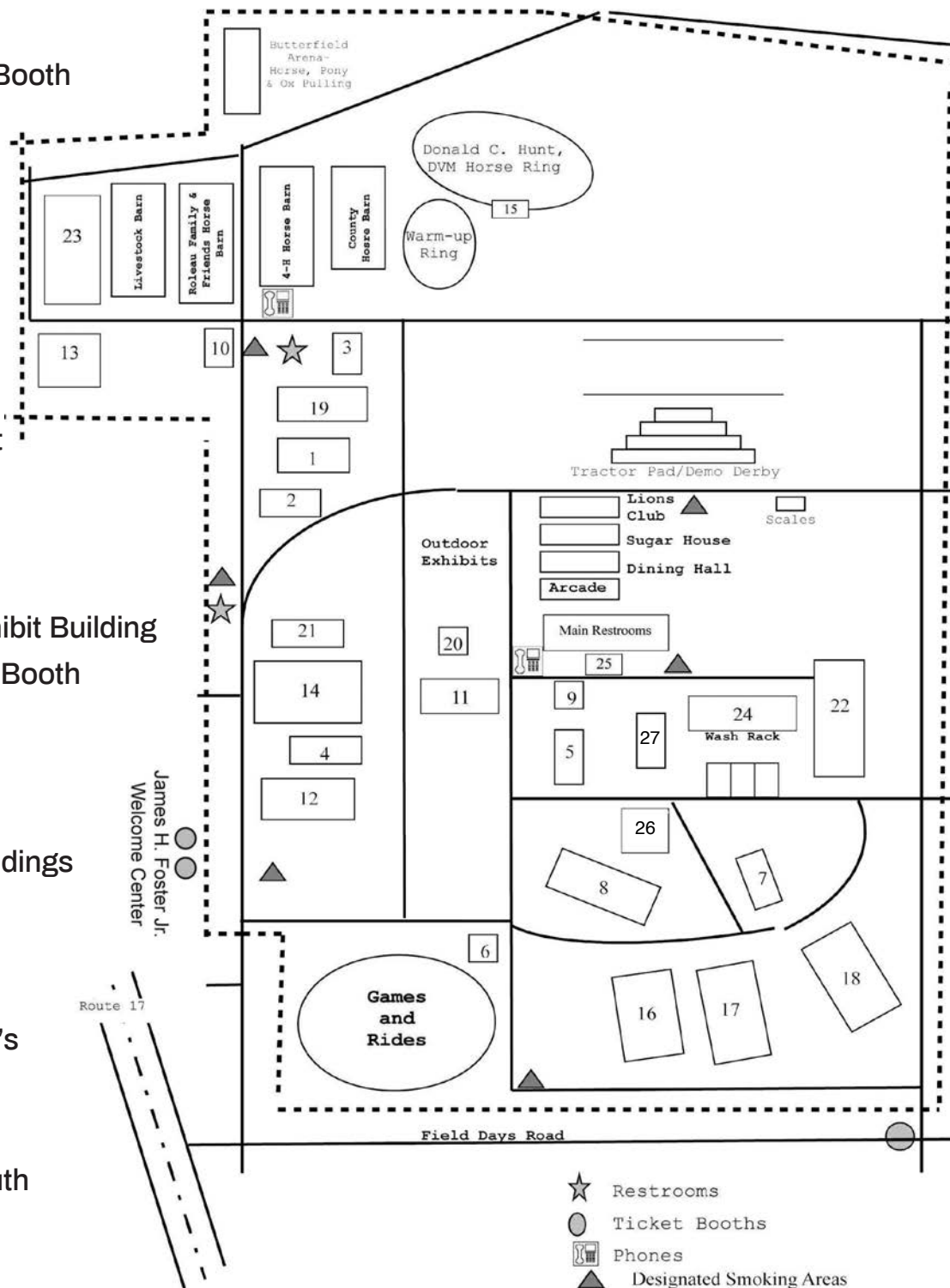
23. Sheep Tents

24. Pony Rides & Free Youth
Activities

25. Infant Comfort Station

26. Addison County Toy Barn

27. Poultry Tent





Schedule of Events

Continued from page 10

- 6:00.....BINGO (bandstand)
 6:30.....Wheels of Ag Tractor Trivia - Strolling Game Show
 7:00.....Magnetic Horse- Local Band (show tent)
 7:00.....Demolition Derby (tractor pad)

Wednesday, August 5

Morning

- 8:30.....English Only 4-H and Open Youth Jr. & Sr. Horse Show (horse area)
 9:00.....Open Dairy Show-Holsteins, Ayrshires, Milking Shorthorns (animal show arena)
 9:30.....Ox Pulling (Butterfield Arena)
 10-Noon.....Children's Activities (children's barnyard area) - FREE
 10:30.....Antique Equipment Demos (antique equipment area)
 10:30.....Pete & Chris Amusements (show tent)
 10:30.....Tractor Trivia - Strolling Game Show
 11:00.....Tom Joyce, The Magic Man (bandstand)

Afternoon

- Noon.....Midway Opens (approximately) \$25 all day ride bracelets
 Noon.....Pirate Man Dan (show tent)
 Noon.....Dig for Treasure! (youth activity area) - FREE
 Noon.....Goat Show (sheep show tent)
 Noon.....Wheels of Ag Game Show (dairy area)
 1:00.....Ladies Iron Skillet Toss (tractor pad)
 1:30.....Antique Equipment Demos (antique equipment area)
 1:30.....4-H Hands-on Workshop (4-H exhibit building)
 1:30.....Pete & Chris Amusements (show tent)
 2-5.....Children's Activities (children's barnyard area) - FREE
 2:00.....Sheep Shearing/Handling Demonstration (sheep show tent)
 2:30.....Tom Joyce, The Magic Man (bandstand)
 3:00.....Wheels of Ag Game Show (dairy area)
 3:00.....Antique Equipment Demos (antique equipment area)
 3:00.....Pirate Man Dan (show tent)
 3:30.....4-H Hands-on Workshop (4-H exhibit building)
 4:00.....Pete & Chris Amusements (show tent)
 5:00.....Youth Beef Clipping & Fitting Demonstration

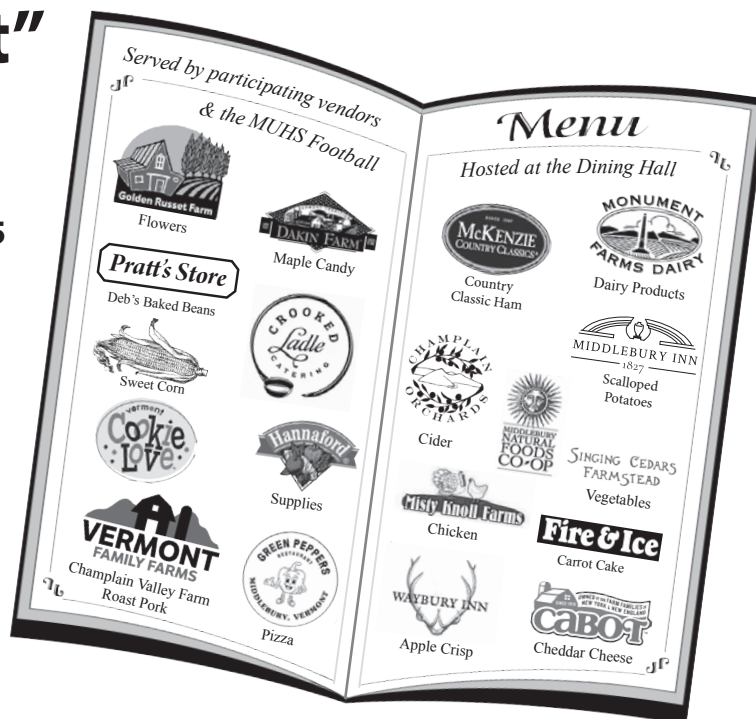
(See Schedule of Events on page 14)

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Opening Day Parade
 6:00PM

Sanctuary Band
 7:00PM

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 Rides and Midway by Dreamland Amusements

Schedule of Events

Continued from page 13

(animal show arena)

5:30.....Wheels of Ag Game Show (dairy area)

5:45.....Power Wheel Derby (Tractor Pad)

6:30.....Wheels of Ag Tractor Trivia - Strolling Game Show

7:00.....Karaoke Talent Night with DJ Amanda Rock (show tent). Signup at 6:30 p.m.

7:00.....Demolition Derby (tractor pad)

Thursday, August 6

Morning

8:00.....Annual ACFFD Open Horse Show (horse area)

9:00.....4-H Dairy Fitting & Showmanship Classes (animal show arena)

9:00.....4-H & Other Youth Sheep Show (sheep show tent)

9:00.....VTPA-Antique & Enhanced Antique Tractor Pulls

10:00.....Hand Mowing Contest (antique equipment demo area)

10:00.....Ox Pulling (weigh-ins 8 a.m.)

10:30.....Antique Equipment Demos (antique equipment area)

10:30.....Wheels of Ag Tractor Trivia - Strolling Game Show

11:00.....Pedal Tractor Pull (show tent) (sign-ups at 10 a.m.)

11:00.....Pete & Chris Amusements (show tent)

11:30.....Tom Joyce, The Magic Man (bandstand)

Afternoon

NoonMidway Opens (approximately) \$25 all day ride bracelets

NoonDig for Treasure! (youth activity area) - FREE

NoonWheels of Ag Game Show (dairy area)

1-5Children's Activities (children's barnyard area) - FREE

1:00.....Pirate Man Dan (show tent)

1:30.....Antique Equipment Demos (antique equipment area)

1:30.....Pete & Chris Amusements (show tent)

1:30.....4-H Hands-on Workshop (4-H exhibit building)

2:30.....Tom Joyce, The Magic Man (bandstand)

2:45.....Pete & Chris Amusements (show tent)

3:00.....Antique Equipment Demos (antique equipment area)

3:00.....Wheels of Ag Game Show (dairy area)

(See Schedule of Events on page 16)

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Crafters vie for Thompson Bowl

By PAIGE HESCOCK

NEW HAVEN — For most participants in the Home and Garden Department competitions at the Addison County Fair & Field Days, having their name etched onto the pewter bowl trophy is only a dream. But for some, this dream has come true.

Since 1974, the Leona Thompson Bowl has been presented annually to the best exhibitor in the Foods and Handicrafts Departments. An individual must earn the most points in both categories, and points are awarded based on the ribbons given.

“Francis Monroe started the Home and Garden Barn, and she named the prize after her friend Leona Thompson. She was an extension agent, a favorite homemaker and an encourager of the home arts,” said Lee Greenewalt, the superintendent of handicrafts at the Home and Garden Barn.

Hannah Sessions, a talented painter and cheesemaker at Blue Ledge Farm in Leicester, earned her name on the coveted bowl in 2024. She described her strategy as “flood the zone” rather than “quality over quantity.”

“When I approached the prepared foods entry table with my laundry basket overflowing with entries, their gasps and wide eyes gave me a glimmer of hope that my strategy might have worked, and it could be my year!” Sessions recalled.

While Sessions knit and sewed various things, she baked many foods and entered in different canned items. She believes it was her granola that won it for her, which was made with local honey and won the Best in Class award in the specific “made with honey” category.

“The Leona Thompson Bowl was folklore in our house as a kid



HANNAH SESSIONS, THE 2024 winner of the Leona Thompson Bowl, presents the impressive trophy to 2025 winner Kacie O’Connell. The bowl is presented annually to the best all-around participant in the Home and Garden Department competitions at the Addison County Fair and Field Days.

Photo by Kate Baker

because my Mom came within one point of winning it sometime in the ’80s. Getting the Sessions name finally etched on that bowl

was thrilling and motivated my Mom to rekindle the Bowl passion,” Sessions said.

(See Leona, Page 16)



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Schedule of Events

Continued from page 14

3:30.....4-H Hands-on Workshop (4-H exhibit building)
 4:00.....Beef Showmanship/Fitting Show (S/I/J/N) & Market Classes (show arena)
 4:00.....Pirate Man Dan (show tent)
 4:30-5Dark Horse Lumberjack Show (tractor pad) (4:30 Prelims)
 5:30.....Wheels of Ag Game Show (dairy area)
 5:30.....Pete & Chris Amusements (show tent)
 5:30.....Miniature Horse Team Hitching Demonstration (children's barnyard area)
 6:00.....BINGO (bandstand)
 6:30.....Wheels of Ag Tractor Trivia - Strolling Game Show
 7-9Good-Time Line Dancing demo/instruction (show tent)
 7:30.....Animal Costume Class (animal show arena)

Friday, August 7

Morning

8:30.....Exhibitors' Breakfast (dining hall)
 8:30.....VTPA-Youth, Adult Stock, Sport Stock, Enhanced Sport Stock, Super Stock, Limited

Pro Diesel, 4 Cylinder Mod, ATVs Antique: all classes beginning with 3,000 pounds and up
 9:00.....Open Sheep Show (sheep show tent)
 9:30.....Draft Horse Show (horse area)
 10-Noon.....Children's Activities (children's barnyard area) - FREE
 10:00.....Pete & Chris Amusements (show tent)
 10:00.....Open Sheep Show (sheep show tent)
 10:00.....Working Steer & Ox Show (animal show arena)
 10:00.....Pony Pulling (Butterfield Arena) Weigh-ins 8 a.m.
 10:30.....Antique Equipment Demos (antique equipment area)
 10:30.....Wheels of Ag Tractor Trivia - Strolling Game Show
 11:30.....Pirate Man Dan (show tent)

Afternoon

Noon.....Dig for Treasure! (Youth activity area) - FREE
 Noon.....Midway Opens (approximately) \$25 all day ride bracelets
 Noon.....Wheels of Ag Game Show (dairy area)
 Noon.....PeeWee Dairy Showmanship (animal show arena)

(See Schedule of Events on page 18)

Leona

(Continued from, Page 15)

So Hannah's mother, Abi Sessions, was in the hunt for the bowl again in 2025.

However, history repeated itself as Abi Sessions was again only one point shy of winning the bowl at the 2025 Field Days.

"I entered 22 things this year, but only had a few baked goods," Abi said. "When I approached the food table and looked over and saw Kacie O'Connell with her heaping basket of food, I knew I had lost my chance."

O'Connell, one of Hannah Sessions's employees at Blue Ledge Farm, had 24 entries in the competition: 10 handicrafts and 14 food items. Her entries varied from a baby-size quilt, a homemade sewn doll and a girl's nightgown to caramel apple cake, homemade apple sauce and granola. She earned three grand ro-

settes for a pair of crochet mittens, her banana bread and apple cake.

"I think that might've been what clinched it," O'Connell told the *Independent*.

While O'Connell was confident in winning, she knew it was going to be close because Abi Sessions had more grand rosettes than her, especially for her canned goods.

"She was tough competition and I honestly thought she had it in the bag," O'Connell said.

In the end, O'Connell's method of quantity over quality, just like Hannah Sessions, helped her earn the O'Connell name on the bowl.

"I'm a bit relieved that I won it this year, but I'll definitely still enter other things next year and eventually enter this award again," O'Connell said in 2025.

As for Abi Sessions, her daughter and O'Connell are both hopeful that 2026 will be her year.

"We'll all be by her side, rooting her on," Hannah said.



KACIE O'CONNELL, THE 2025 winner of the Leona Thompson Bowl, smiles at the camera as she shows off her mini bowl award that she gets to take home. The big bowl will have her name etched on it and stay at the fair.

Photo by Alicia Hughart



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Schedule of Events

Continued from page 16

12:30.....	Pete & Chris Amusements (show tent)
1:00.....	Tom Joyce, Magician (bandstand)
1:00.....	4 Abreast, Show Division (horse area)
1:30.....	Antique Equipment Demos (antique equipment area)
1:30.....	4-H Hands-on Workshop (4-H exhibit building)
1:30.....	Pirate Man Dan (show tent)
2-5	Children's Activities (children's barnyard area) – FREE
2:45.....	Pete & Chris Amusements (show tent)
3:00.....	Future Showmanship/Fitting Class & Beef Conformation & Group Classes
3:00.....	Wheels of Ag Game Show (dairy area)
3:00.....	Antique Equipment Demos (antique equipment area)
3:30.....	4-H Hands-on Workshop (4-H exhibit building)
3:30.....	Tom Joyce, The Magic Man (bandstand)
5:00.....	98.9 WOKO Armwrestling-Kids 16 & under, sign up at 4 p.m. (show tent)
5:30.....	Wheels of Agriculture Game Show (dairy area)
5:30.....	Miniature Horse Team Hitching Demonstration (children's barnyard area)
6:30.....	Wheels of Ag Tractor Trivia - Strolling Game Show
6:00.....	VTPA- Trucks: Factory Stock St. Legal, Enhanced St. Legal, St. Mod, Work Stock Diesel, Open St. Legal Diesel, 3.0 Pro Diesel, SS 4x4, 2WD Mini, V8 Minis, Semis
6:00.....	Design a hat with Hat Tat (bandstand)
7:00.....	98.9 WOKO Armwrestling-Adults, weigh-ins 5 p.m. (show tent)

Saturday, August 8

Morning

9:00.....	Open Dairy Show-Jersey, Brown Swiss & Guernsey
9:00.....	Paint with KT Kayhart - Barn Quilts (bandstand)
9:30.....	Draft Horse Show (horse area)
10:00.....	Baked Bean Contest & Samples (picnic pavilion)
10:00.....	Horse Pulling, Weigh-ins 8AM (Butterfield Arena)
10-Noon.....	Children's Activities (children's barnyard area) - FREE
10:30.....	Antique Equipment Demos (antique equipment area)
10:30.....	Wheels of Ag Tractor Trivia - Strolling Game

(See Schedule of Events on page 19)

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Schedule of Events

Continued from page 18

Show

- 10:00.....Youth and Other 4-H Sheep Show
 11:00.....Highland Dance Vermont- Scottish Highland
 Dance School Performance (Show Tent)

Afternoon

- Noon.....VTPA- Pure Stock/Out of Field Farm Stock,
 Farm Stock, Hot Farm, 466 Hot Farm Altered
 Farm
 Noon.....Midway Opens (approximately) \$25 all day
 ride bracelets
 Noon.....Dig for Treasure! (youth activity area) - FREE
 Noon.....Wheels of Ag Game Show (dairy area)
 12:30.....Pirate Man Dan (show tent)
 1:00.....Six Horse Hitch, North American Classic Six
 Qualifier (horse area)
 1:30.....Antique Equipment Demos (antique
 equipment area)
 1:30.....4-H Hands-on Workshop (4-H exhibit
 building)
 2-5Children's Activities (children's barnyard area)
 - FREE
 3:00.....Pirate Man Dan (show tent)
 3:00.....Wheels of Ag Game Show (dairy area)
 3:00.....4H & Other Youth Poultry Showmanship
 (children's barnyard area)
 3:00.....Antique Equipment Demos (antique
 equipment area)
 3:30.....Tom Joyce, The Magic Man (show tent)
 Presentation (home & garden building)
 3:30.....4-H Hands-on Workshop (4-H exhibit
 building)
 5:00.....Home & Garden Awards & Leona Thompson
 Bowl
 5:30.....Wheels of Ag Game Show (dairy area)
 5:30.....Miniature Horse Team Hitching
 Demonstration (children's barnyard area)
 6:00.....BINGO (bandstand)
 6:00.....VTPA-Pure Stock/Out of Field Farm Stock,
 Farm Stock, Hot Farm, 466 Hot Farm Altered
 Farm
 6:00.....NYTPA - Sanctioned Super Farm & Limited
 ProTractor Pulls (tractor pad)
 6:30.....Wheels of Ag Tractor Trivia - Strolling Game
 Show
 7:00.....Vermont's own 40th Army band, IRON
 SIGHTS rock band (show tent)



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Armrestling offers thrills

By MARIA BARR

Armrestling celebrated its 48th year at the Addison County Fair and Field Days in 2025, and drew nearly 200 competitors from across the Northeast. That reaffirmed its status as one of the longest-running tournaments in the country.

The youth division last year nearly doubled expectations with 88 entrants ranging from under five years old to age 16. Forty-one were girls — almost half the field.

“It was great to see so many girls interested in competing,” said Priscilla Barry, the event’s bracket manager and announcer. “It certainly tends to be a male-dominated sport, so it’s fantastic to see girls and young women showing an interest.”

In adult competition, 79 competitors earned podium finishes. Kris Mikels capped

tured the right-handed title, while Jonathan Waldvogel won left-handed honors. The adult tournament featured both amateur and pro classes, with amateur participation now outpacing the pros.

Tournament director Bill Sinks — a professional armrestler who at that point in 2025 had won four events that year — credited social media for fueling interest in the sport.

“The sport in itself is growing exponentially because of all the online presence, and everything is just getting crazy,” he said. “There’s so many people that are interested in it, and I get calls and messages on Facebook all the time, asking ‘Where can I train?’”

Sinks, who runs state’s largest armrestling club — VERMONT Power — out of his Weybridge home gym, said the sport’s accessibility keeps it thriving.

“You know, you stay



AMATEUR AND PRO armrestlers go head-to-head in the 48th annual tournament at Addison County Fair and Field Days in 2025 — one of the longest-running armrestling competitions in the nation.

Independent file photo/Steve James

in shape, you can compete into your 50s and 60s. And I’m still competing. I just turned 61 a couple weeks ago. I’ve won four tournaments this year already, and I didn’t compete much last year. And it’s just because it’s so much a part of my life,” Sinks added.

The tournament’s origins date to 1977, when Armand Brisson and his family founded it. Each year, they sponsor the Armand Brisson Sportsmanship Award, which in 2025 went to Ed Farren, who drove seven and a half hours from northern Maine to compete in the Field Days tournament.

Competitors last year came from Vermont, New York, New Hampshire, Maine, Connecticut and New Jersey, with pro-class

entrants representing the wider Northeast.

“People a lot of times come with a preconceived notion of what they think it is, but in all reality, it’s nothing like that. You know, it’s not beer drinking guys that are just getting angry at each other at armrestling,” Sinks explained. “That’s not the case. These guys are dedicated athletes.”

The 98.9 WOKO Armrestling tournament at the 2026 Field Days will take place on Friday, Aug. 7, at the Show Tent. Kids age 16 younger can sign up at 4 p.m., then the one-on-one competition starts at 5 p.m. Adult sign up and weigh in begins at 5 p.m.; head-to-head competition begins at 7.



WHITING’S TJ ASHLEY, age 9, wears a fierce expression as he battles an opponent in the right-handed Boys’ Age 9-10 division at the 2025 Addison County Fair and Field Days armrestling tournament.

Independent file photo/Steve James

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Tom Joyce's magic show is bananas - be amazed

By BEE ECKELS

NEW HAVEN — Looking for some summertime magic? Magician Tom Joyce tells us that the phrases to chant this summer are not “abracadabra” or “open sesame.” Instead, he says the magic words are “I love Field Days.”

For two decades, Joyce has been performing at the Addison County Fair and Field Days. He began putting on his act in 2004, and in 2026 he is doing two shows every day (only one on Saturday). Find him in the Bandstand.

“Whenever I go to Field Days, magical and amazing things seem to happen all day long,” Joyce told the crowd.

During his 45-minute performances, Joyce performs a series of tricks that delight and excite his audience. In a 2025 performance, he opened with a mind-reading trick that involved the participation of the young camper-packed audience that had come to find ref-

uge from the boiling sun.

He selected one of the children to close their eyes and placed a cube covered in six different emojis into a small box. Then, Joyce asked one of the counselors to guess what emoji the camper was thinking of. When the counselor guessed “sunglasses,” Joyce opened the box and there it was, a smiling emoji wearing sunglasses.

Following the success of his first trick, Joyce used three colorful scarves — blue, green and red — and played an interactive rhyming game with the audience. Once he ran out of things that rhyme with “red,” Joyce ended the trick by pulling a bouquet of flowers out of the middle of the green scarf. This feat received a collective gasp from the children.

Joyce pulled out his “clap-o-meter” to measure the enthusiasm of the audience. Not surprisingly, the box burst open in response to the deafening roar produced by the

kids.

The audience was deeply involved in this interactive show with many members going up to stand next to Joyce and hand him missing bits that had flown off of one wand end or another. They even cheerfully heckled him when he made silly — purposeful — mistakes. While not all of these interruptions were planned, Joyce seamlessly worked them all into his act.

Some of Joyce's signature acts, and quite obviously fan favorites, include the “Vanishing Banana” trick where instead of making bananas disappear, he multiplies them and acts alarmed when he holds up his hand and finds yet another banana in it; the “Loose Wand” trick where he pretends the caps at either end of his wand are screwed on tightly, but when he turns around, they shoot off into the audience to the delight of the kids; the “Timmy the Toilet Paper”

trick which ends with Joyce pulling a 20-foot-long strand of toilet paper out of his mouth; and the “Tooth Fairy” trick where he pulls half dollar coins out of thin air. Even if you think they are coming, these tricks are amazing to see in person.

When a segment concludes, Joyce will say the phrase, “That’s the end of that one,” to which the audience will respond, “Awww.”

Joyce will then whip around and say, “But I have another one!” and the audience will shout, “Yay!”

At the end of his show, Joyce concluded with a trick that made large pieces of colorful tissue paper disappear. But, when he opened his hands, they exploded into a bunch of tiny colorful ribbons, mimicking a firework explosion. He then thanked the audience for attending.

“I will literally be here all week,” Joyce said jokingly (but truthfully).



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FIELD DAYS

ENTERTAINMENT

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Fairgoers look forward to engaging agricultural shows and displays, competitions of all sorts, thrilling rides, people to meet, food to sample and animals to admire.

For those who want to be entertained from the bleachers rather than in the ring, this year's fair will certainly not disappoint. The lineup is packed with classic favorites ranging from the



IRON SIGHTS

annual opening parade to karaoke, clowns and magicians. Musicians will perform '90s rock, classic rock, blues, bluegrass and more. Plus there will be line dancing in which everyone is invited to join in.

There are several acts sprinkled around the fairgrounds that repeat multiple times this week, so if you miss the first one, come back the second or third time.

Here's a review of some of these acts and short profiles of entertainers that you'll want to check out at this year's fair.

Look for some great music at the fair this year — there's something almost every night in the Show Tent.

The tunes start on Tuesday night at 7 p.m. with the local band "Magnetic Horse." This is a high-energy band to dance and party with or simply enjoy listening to. With a song list of more than 100 tunes from the '60s to the present, they play the tunes people love, including many that other bands don't attempt. In addition to original music, the foursome performs songs by Tom Petty, The Beatles, ZZ Top, Bob Seger, The Beach Boys, Fleetwood Mac, The Eagles, Darius Rucker, Steve Winwood, Poison, Talking Heads, Post Malone and many more well-known acts.

Fronting the band is vocalist/multi-instrumentalist Jon Randel, who lives in Middlebury. He started playing guitar and harmonica at age 13 and added keyboards. You may have seen him in the band Blues Without Borders. Joe Musolino began

(Continued on Page 24)



Each summer the Addy Indy and Agway partner to present the Garden Game, awarding prizes for the largest entries in each of the fruit and veggie categories below:

Asparagus (length x circumference)	Melon (circumference)
Beet (circumference)	Onion (circumference)
Broccoli (diameter)	Parsnip (circumference)
Cabbage (circumference)	Pepper (circumference x circumference)
Cantaloupe (circumference)	Potato (length x circumference)
Carrot (length x circumference)	Pumpkin (circumference x circumference)
Cauliflower (diameter)	Radish (circumference)
Corn (length x circumference)	Rhubarb (length)
Cucumber (length x circumference)	Rutabaga (circumference)
Edible Leafy Greens (length x width - leaf only)	Summer Squash (length x circumference)
Eggplant (circumference x circumference)	Sunflower (diameter)
Fennel (length x circumference)	Sweet Potato (length x circumference)
Green Bean (length)	Tomato (circumference)
Kohlrabi (circumference)	Turnip (circumference)
Leek (length x circumference)	Winter Squash (length x circumference)
	Zucchini (length x circumference)



How do you play the Garden Game?

Just bring in any of the above fruits/veggies to our office at 58 Maple Street, Middlebury to be officially measured. Weekly front runners will be posted online and listed in the newspaper. Entries must be home-grown in the greater Addison County area. One winner per category. One prize per person. Winners will be announced after the first local frost.

Visit addisonindependent.com/contests for more info.

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FIELD DAYS ENTERTAINMENT

playing guitar at 14 and studied at the Berklee College of Music. Born in Los Angeles, Don Monroe has lived in the Northeast for all of his adult life. Over the last 15 years, he sang and played bass with many bands, and also sang and played guitar as a solo performer. He moved to Middlebury full-time in 2023 and happily keeps performing.

The well-known drummer Tim Buskey is a native of the Green Mountain State who grew up in Middlebury and now lives in Vergennes. In addition to being a musician, Tim has been a radio broadcaster for 35 years.

On Wednesday night at 7 p.m. in the Show Tent, it will be YOU and your neighbors providing the music. DJ Amanda Rock will lead Karaoke Talent Night, where regular folks can show off their extra special vocal talents. Sign up for your opportunity to stand in the spotlight beginning at 6:30 p.m., or just show up at 7 and enjoy the music of your friends and neighbors — you might just be surprised!

The Show Tent on Thursday at 7 p.m. will host Good-Time Line Dancing demo and instruction. Rooted in Addison County since 2016, Good Time Line Dancing is all about fun, community and making dance wel-



DARK HORSE LUMBERJACK

coming for everyone. Teaching both contemporary and classic line dances with a beginner-friendly vibe, Good Time Line Dancing lights up local spots like Woodchuck Cider House and beyond! Whether you're stopping in to learn or just soak in the good vibes, this local favorite delivers nothing but good

times — no experience necessary!

Dance instructor Andrea Warren — with the help of the audience — will turn the Show Tent into a boot stompin' line dancing floor. The emphasis will be on fun — not perfection. As she told the *Addison Independent*, "There are no mistakes; there

are only variations. We're all human here. All I ask is that people stay in lines, well because it's Line Dancing! But, you don't have to be strict — you can spin if ya want to."

Music gets a break on Friday evening when a different kind of entertainment takes over the Show Tent. The WOKO Arm-wrestling tournament invites youngsters and adults to wrestle — arms only — on the stage in front of a cheering audience. Kids aged 16 and younger can sign up to take part at 4 p.m., then the one-on-one combat starts at 5 p.m. Then the Big Kids — also known as "Adults" — will step in the ring. There are different divisions based on weight and gender. If you want to compete, sign up and weigh in beginning at 5 p.m. Head-to-head competition begins at 7 p.m.

Then, more typical entertainment returns to the Show Tent on Saturday with two unique performances.

The first is at 11 a.m. when Highland Dance Vermont performs a series of dances in the Scottish Highland Dance style. Katherine Levasseur leads dancers who live by the dictum "As strong as a warrior and as grace-

(Continued on Page 25)

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FIELD DAYS ENTERTAINMENT

ful as a ballerina, we are the dancers of Scotland.” This is a very athletic, competitive style of solo step dancing from the Scottish Highlands. It combines intricate footwork with balletic upper body movements. If you’re lucky, you will see kilts and hear bagpipes.

Then the musical offerings at the Show Tent wrap up at 7 p.m. on Saturday with the group called “Iron Sights.” It is a dynamic rock band comprised of seven soldiers from Vermont’s own 40th Army

SCOTTISH
HIGHLAND
DANCERS



Band. Touring throughout the state, Iron Sights delivers a performance featuring a high energy blend of classic ’80s and ’90s rock, infused with elements of R&B for a unique sound.

The soldiers proudly represent the Vermont Army National Guard through their music and will offer a show that resonates with audiences of all ages. The group is known for energized, crowd-pleasing renditions of classic rock staples, like Creedence Clearwater Revival and the Doobie Brothers, and contemporary pop hits, including Walk the Moon and Alicia Keys.

BEYOND THE MUSIC

Entertainment at Field Days is more than just listening. One thing is the Dark Horse Lumberjack Show, which will take place on Thursday, 4:30 p.m., at the Tractor Pad. This show combines athletic competition, education, and entertainment in a high-energy, engaging performance for audiences of all ages. Audience members will see not just athleticism but also equipment proficiency, discipline, and safety practices rooted in tradi-



GOOD TIMES LINE DANCING

tional forestry and lumberjack sports.

Events at the competition at Field Days will include crosscut sawing, axe throwing, hot sawing, underhand chopping, bow sawing and relay races.

Look for these fun things today outside of the ordinary:

- **Wheels of Agriculture Game Show** is an audience interactive game show that takes place on a stage. The format is a trivia-based game play in which the person who can answer a randomly selected question gains points. The questions are primarily agricultural based and include topics such as: Local Agriculture, Animals, Plants, Food Groups, Farm and barnyard, music and other sounds. Sounds perfect for the Addison County Fair and Field Days.

- **Pirate Man Dan** can be found daily sailing the grounds with his bubble boat, strolling across the midway with his long sea legs or in the big tent doing shows. Catch him trying to escape a giant balloon, juggling some fire, or even actively going for a world record live during performances! Based out of

Groton, this local entertainer has tours ranging from the San Antonio Rodeo in Texas to the Big E in Massachusetts. You can only find him at large events like the Addison County Fair and Field days and if you mention you saw him in the *Addison Independent* he may even give you a free Pirate Treasure!



MAGICIAN TOM JOYCE



MAGNETIC HORSE

(Continued on Page 27)



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FIELD DAYS ENTERTAINMENT

(Continued from Page 25)

• **Vermont Magician Tom Joyce** delivers a really funny magic show that is full of laughs, tons of audience participation and amazing magic. Magic Wands! Magic Words! Magical Memories!

Tom is a former magician at the world famous "F.A.O. Schwartz Toy Store" in New York City that was featured in the popular movie "Big." After that, he became a Magical Bartender at T.G.I Friday's on the Upper East Side of Manhattan.

Tom performed his first magic show at age 8 and has been living up to his nickname, "The Funny Magic Guy" ever since. He keeps this show suitable for ages 4 and up.

• **BINGO!** This one word sums it all up. American Legion Post 27 will host BINGO Aug. 4, 6 and 8 at 6 p.m. each night in the Bandstand tent.

• Plus, there is **Mini Golf** all week. Started by Peter Miller when he was only 19 years old, the Portable Mini Golf Company has more than 75 different mini golf holes and has completed hundreds of events across all of New England and New York.

We'll close with one of the first things at the fair — the **Field Days Opening Parade**. It steps off from near the tractor pad at 6 p.m. on Tuesday. This year's theme is "Carnival Lights, Country Nights." All entrants are asked to assemble 45 minutes before the parade start time on the east side of the Dusty Chuck. There will be prizes for the winning entries. Contact Benj Deppman at 802-724-1381 or any Field Days director if you plan to participate. Maybe you should march in the parade: Ribbons for the top three winning entries.



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Sheep shearer keeps traditional farm craft alive

By MARIA BARR

NEW HAVEN —At the Addison County Fair and Field Days last year, a quiet but steady draw on the Agricultural Stage was a sheep shearing demonstration by professional shearer Siri Swanson. The sheep, a Finnish Landrace — or Finn — belonged to the Gordon-Layn family of Monkton.

The event bridged past and future: an age-old craft meeting a new generation reviving endangered livestock traditions.

Swanson co-owns Yankee Rock Farm LLC in Bridport with her partner Colin Siegmund. She shears at over 600 farms annually across New England and maintains a flock of about 200 sheep herself. Like many young agriculturalists, her journey began in 4-H.

“When I was a 4-H kid, I learned the basics of shearing just by being around, you know. I sheared a couple of my own sheep, but I didn’t love it,” Swanson said. “I went to school for animal science and was getting towards the end of college, looking at jobs, and a shearer in Vermont retired. So the opportunity was there. And I started shearing kind of begrudgingly. I didn’t want to take it on full time.

“But I think I just hadn’t trained enough. And so it’s really hard when you’re starting. When that opportunity came up, when he retired, and there was a lot more sheep to shear, I found I really did love it.”

Now one of the most experienced shearers in the region, Swanson works with farms of all sizes, which she says has shaped her understanding of the industry.

“All around New England, we see people raising sheep for every different purpose — small scale, large scale, commercial,



VETERAN SHEARER SIRI Swanson carefully shaves a Finnsheep at the Addison County Fair and Field Days in 2025. The three to four pounds of wool were immediately gathered by a member of the Twist O’ Wool Guild to be used for demos later in the afternoon.

Independent photo/Steve James

pets — like all of it. Every type of breed and fiber. And that has been so informative to me to see all the different ways people can successfully raise sheep — and unsuccessfully, you know, everyone has these trials and tribulations. I think as a shearer going to all these farms, there’s no other education in your local sheep industry better than that,”

Swanson said.

While she still enjoys the technical aspects of shearing, teaching the next generation has become her biggest reward.

“Working with kids is the most rewarding for me right now, because I was in that position several years ago. Like, there’s a 4H kid here who just this year I helped teach her how to start to

shear her own (sheep) bellies... to see a kid get comfortable with their sheep, get comfortable with some equipment, and it can really pull them out of their shell and just become like a whole new person giving them these tools and the confidence to show off what they’re doing,” Swanson added. “I think it’s really impressive what they can do and I’m really glad to be a part of it.”

NEXT GENERATION

That idea — young people gaining confidence through hands-on animal work — was echoed in the story of the sheep Swanson had just shorn. It belonged to a family involved in the Youth Conservationist Program (YCP), a national initiative connecting youth with endangered heritage sheep breeds.

Natalie Layn, 14, and her cousin Olivia Gordon-Layn, 12, participate in the YCP, which places yearling ewes with youth age 9–18. The program aims to preserve heritage livestock once common on American farms — breeds prized for genetic diversity and hardiness.

To keep their sheep, participants must show them at two fairs, use the fleece, complete educational projects, and create a scrapbook for donors. Success earns them the right to keep and breed the animal.

Natalie’s journey began by reaching out to Swanson. Heather Layn, Natalie’s mother, explained:

“My daughter started showing sheep seven years ago. The first year, she had no idea what she was doing, and she actually reached out to Siri to give her some tips. And the following year, she started leasing sheep from her, so she could learn

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more about it in show. And then we learned about the new conservation program where they give heritage breed sheep to kids. So my daughter applied, and her first year applying, she won, and we had to go to Maryland to a little festival to receive this sheep.”

Their efforts didn’t stop there. “So Natalie completed her first year... and then she reapplied again this year thinking that she wouldn’t get selected. And she got her cousin to join her and they both won. So we go back to Maryland, and we got more sheep. So now we’re doing a whole program all over again.”

Heather added that three girls in the family have now received sheep through the YCP.

“My daughter’s 14 right now. And Olivia was 11 when she won her sheep. And then my other niece, she won a sheep in the program as well. She’s 10. So when we went down there, they were gifting the sheep — I believe there’s 22 sheep gifted — the kids were from all across the country... And they started calling out all the kids from Vermont. And they were like, whoa, there must be some really good 4-H leaders down there pushing the program.”

Young participants like Natalie and Olivia show that Vermont’s sheep farming tradition is far from fading. In fact, it harkens back to the early 19th-century “sheep boom,” when the arrival of Merino sheep from Spain transformed Vermont into a wool powerhouse.

The demonstration ring at Field Days — with heritage breeds and young handlers — offers a living glimpse of that legacy. Through shearers like Swanson and the dedication of 4-H families and youth conservationists, Vermont’s rural heritage isn’t just remembered — it’s alive.

Oxen go ‘All the way!’ pulling heavy loads

By PAIGE HESCOCK

Regular attendees of the ox pulling at Butterfield Arena at the Addison County Fair & Field Days would be quite familiar with this phrase — “All the way!”

It was repeatedly called out by Annie Wilson, the longtime announcer of the event during the 2025 fair. She declares this when a yoke of oxen, pulling a stone-boat that carries at least 500 pounds to start the pull, has successfully reached the end line (six feet of distance from the starting point).

Wilson has been the commentator since 2004, after Margaret Belle retired. Before that, attending the annual ox pull at Field Days was routine for Wilson, who would always be listening to the announcers and keeping track of the scoring, even establishing her own scoring system.

“Annie has always been a huge fan of ox pulling and has learned a lot just from watching,” Renee Pechie, a friend of Wilson’s and the scorekeeper of the event, told the *Independent*.

Wilson was often surrounded by farm animals growing up, when her parents owned Holsteins and

Morgan horses. She now has Lineback cattle and some heifers of her own.

Today, that lifelong connection to livestock continues, as Wilson now works with oxen that compete across a range of weight classes.

There are five different weight classes in which the oxen are classified: 2,000 lb. or under; 2,400 lb. or under; 2,800 lb. or under; 3,200 lb. or under and “free-for-all,” where there is no limit on the weight.

Each ox pull has five minutes to get to the end of the line and three tries within those minutes. Blocks weighing 500-1,000 pounds are added to the stone-boat after each pair of oxen has reached the line. More weight is added until only one yoke of oxen is left standing after the rest have been eliminated. The same process continues for each weight class.

Wilson expresses how humane these practices are. If the oxen cannot pull the weight, their owners will not force them to strain their muscles too much, she said.

“These guys (the oxen) love to do it, and the owners just love their animals. This is bovine husbandry:

animal lovers who truly care for their animals,” Wilson said.

“This group of pullers is a great bunch of individuals who treat their oxen well,” Pechie reaffirmed.

The oxen come from all over the Northeast: Vermont, Massachusetts, New Hampshire and New York.

Scott Spencer, an oxen owner from Benson, spoke about his two oxen that he entered in the free-for-all weight class for the first time.

Brick, his 7-year-old Chianina ox, went from 1,700 to 2,000 pounds in only a month. He feeds his bigger oxen 16 quarts of cow grain, DAC oil and half to a full bale of hay a day. To keep them well-hydrated, he provides them with a 5-gallon pail of orange-flavored electrolytes.

Spencer plans for his oxen to grow even bigger over time. One pair currently weighs 4,100 pounds together, and he hopes they will weigh 5,000-5,200 pounds by this time next year.

“You’ve got to get your oxen as big as possible for the free-for-all. I feed them and work them like they’re athletes,” Spencer said.



BRIAN PATTON GUIDES his pair of Chianina oxen, Bob and Squid, towards the stone-boat for their turn in pulling.

Independent photo/Paige Hescock



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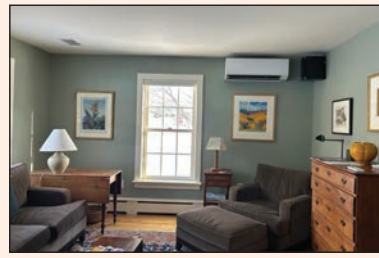
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