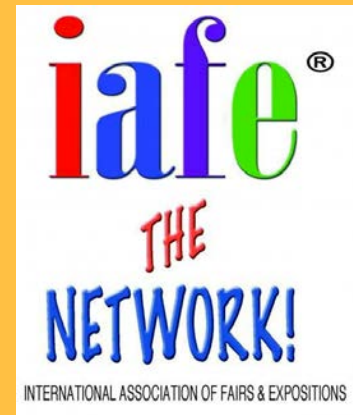




MAAF NEWSLETTER

MARCH
APRIL
2026



EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR'S NOTE

Welcome to 2026, the 250th anniversary of our Country and the International Year of the Woman Farmer.

First and foremost, I'd like to thank everyone for making the 2026 MAAF conference a wonderful event. The conference team did an amazing job putting it together. We have heard your concerns and are putting measures in place to make the conference experience more enjoyable. This will be on January 21st-24th at the Cross Insurance Center in Bangor,. Please mark your calendars.



I am encouraging all of the fairs to incorporate the 250th anniversary theme in some form during their fair.

In addition this is also the International Year of the Woman Farmer. I'm challenging all of our fairs to look at the women farmers in their area that make a difference at the fair. Select one to be recognized during your fair. MAAF will create a banner, similar to our Rising Star banner, and introduce it at the annual conference recognizing those selected. We will also be highlighting each in the bi-monthly newsletter as the fair season goes on. You may contact Jim Britt of the DCAF Commissioners office for more information at jim.britt@maine.gov

I'd like to thank Fryeburg, Acton/Ossipee, Cumberland, Skowhegan and Houlton fairs for hosting the You Make The Difference Tour with Ian Hill.

2026 IAFE Zone 1 Meeting

**The IAFE 2026 Zone 1 Meeting will be held
April 9-11 at the following property:**

**Delta Hotels by Marriott Allentown Lehigh Valley
7736 Adrienne Dr
Breinigsville, PA 18031**

**Go to the IAFE website, Zone 1 meeting and get all of the information on the conference.
Hope to see many of you there.**

Keeping you updated: the MAAF IT committee is working on the Website to make it more user friendly. Look for the updated website in a couple of months.

I'm also happy to report that the committee on Agriculture, Conservation and Forestry has approved LD 2096 with amendments supported by the fairs, which will allow for exhibition judging as well as others for up to 48 hrs. prior to the fair opening. I'll post the link once it's passed and signed by the Governor.

Looking forward to a fantastic fair season! Please remember - We ALL make a difference in our agricultural community. Barry

YOU MAKE THE DIFFERENCE COME TO ONE OF OUR MAINE DATES!

FMI: www.youmakethedifference/maine/

The truth is simple. The people closest to the problem are always best suited to solve the problem. That is why You Make the Difference exists—not to be the answer, but to unleash the people who are. The grassroots leaders. The rural volunteers. The neighbors who refuse to let their communities fade. They are the Difference Makers. History reminds us: when ordinary people rise, extraordinary things happen.

What is You Make THE Difference?

The You Make THE Difference program is about people. Created and led by award-winning humanitarian Ian Hill, the initiative exists because rural communities and fairs are facing real headwinds: aging leadership, fewer volunteers, and increasing demands with limited resources. Hill believes the future of fairs—and the communities they serve—rests not in distant institutions, but in everyday people who roll up their sleeves and say yes when they are needed most.

The program provides practical strategies to recruit and inspire volunteers, strengthen leadership, and build long-term sustainability. It combines high-energy, face-to-face sessions with an innovative digital follow-up system that keeps support and resources flowing long after the workshop ends.

What the Grant Provides:

Thanks to this grant, Maine fairs will receive the full benefits of the You Make THE Difference program at no cost. The grant includes:

- A statewide training tour that will bring in-person workshops directly to fair boards.
- Access to a digital training platform and mobile app with videos, guides, and on-demand tools for ongoing support.
- A featured training session delivered by Ian Hill himself (at Fryeburg on Sunday, March 8th from 1:30-4:30 with coffee, drinks & snacks provided).

Why It Matters for Maine:

Fairs in Maine are more than events. They are vital community institutions—part of the cultural fabric of our state—that showcase agriculture, provide opportunities for youth, and bring generations together. Yet many fairs are facing challenges in volunteer recruitment, financial pressures, and leadership fatigue.

The You Make THE Difference initiative is designed to meet these needs head-on. By equipping local boards with practical tools and ongoing support, the program helps ensure fairs remain strong, resilient, and relevant for decades to come. This isn't just about sustaining fairs—it's about empowering the people who make them possible.

To learn more, reserve & register, go to www.youmakethedifference/maine/

Don't take our word for it — here's what Difference Makers across America are saying about You Make THE Difference:
"An excellent opportunity..."



“What an AMAZING training!”

“One of the biggest hearts I’ve ever seen...”

“Will help us move forward to even greater success...”

This movement is changing communities — and now it’s coming to Maine!

www.youmakethedifference/maine/ JOIN US!

you make **THE**
DIFFERENCE



We’re not building something new.
We’re awakening what’s already there.

— *Ian Hill, YMTD Founder*




Fryeburg - Shapleigh - Gray
Skowhegan - Bangor - Houlton, ME

March 2026

*Register
Now*



Made possible through the generous support of  **fairs.com**

RIISING STAR AWARD 2025

ANDY DUGAS

Andy Dugas’ commitment to the Cumberland Fair goes far beyond the responsibilities of any single title or position. His involvement began in his teenage years, working side by side with his grandfather, Bud Knight. First he participated in the camping department and later within the motorized events.

Following his grandfather’s passing, Andy stepped forward in 2012 to assume the role of Superintendent of Motorized Events - a responsibility he took on not only out of duty but out of deep respect for the legacy left



before him. . Since then, he has continuously gone above and beyond what is expected, ensuring that some of the fair's most popular and complex events operate safely, efficiently and successfully year after year.

Andy's impact extends well beyond his department. He is known for quietly stepping in wherever help is needed, often bringing his own equipment, materials and expertise to support fairground projects.

Since joining the Cumberland Farmers' Club Executive Board as a Director in 2019, Andy has continued to show his thoughtful leadership and dedication to the fair community as a whole. He approaches challenges with a problem solving

mindset, considers multiple perspectives and offers meaningful input that strengthens our organization. His reliability, work ethic and willingness to lead by example make him an invaluable asset to the Cumberland Fair and a true Rising Star within the Maine Fair community.

Andy serves as a strong role model within our community. As a young business owner - general manager and part owner of the Royal River Boatyard , he demonstrates initiative, responsibility and integrity, showing other young people that hard work and dedication can lead to meaningful success. He oversees day-to-day operations, works closely with other employees at all levels and provides mentorship to his younger staff.

Within the fair community, Andy holds multiple leadership roles. In these roles Andy collaborates extensively with fellow board members, volunteers, vendors, members of other Maine fairs and participants to plan, coordinate and safely execute popular events such as the Demolition Derby, Truck and Tractor Pulls, and high energy thrill shows like RaveX Motocross.

Through his leadership, hands-on involvement and willingness to take on responsibility, **Andy Dugas** plays a key role in enhancing the fair experiences for participants, volunteers and the public. His dedication helps ensure that the Cumberland Fair remains vibrant, well-run and successful year after year.

Congratulations **Andy Dugas**, the 2025 Maine Fair Association Rising Star !

THANK YOU LETTER FROM THE EDITOR

Thank you to so many businesses, individuals and more who made this move to the Bangor Cross Center as seamless as possible - plus those of you who made the trek north (and south) to this new conference venue. My memory reminds me that when I first attended the MAAF convention in Portland I was from the fair that was selected to be shuttled between a hotel near the train station and the Holiday Inn By The Bay, and I took good care to bring my BINGO game prize with me. In the corner of the downstairs room I can still see Roger Hoffses and Katie Damren selling 50-50 tickets for the MAAF Scholarship fund. The carnivals often invited their fairs out to dinner on Friday evening, and I also remember that the fair queens were introduced with escorts that could have been a boyfriend, a brother or even a dad. I watched a hypnotist, the Marden's Lady, the Saltwater Hillbilly



and so many more entertainers...and even made a trip or two to the "Firecracker Room." A commonality appears to be that lousy weather followed us year after year.

The Holiday Inn was due for renovations, and MAAF relocated to the Sheraton at Sable Oaks - still sharing our room arrangement but this time with Holiday Inn Express. The Sheraton was a bit more upscale, and we began to make some changes based on input from the fairs. There were new workshops - Fairs Helping Fairs, insurance, etc. Previous programs were tweaked. Now we had the Maine Association of Agricultural Fairs Foundation, (thank you to Hope Ricker and her team) and they became the driving force behind the auction (which took the place of BINGO) and raised

money for several scholarships, sending more and more young men and women to higher education in a variety of agricultural fields. Two dances now, a variety show, many more vendors (who became a special part of our fair family) and fairs becoming more interested in the IAFE and what it could bring to our Maine programs. Which meant that we needed more and more rooms for overnight lodging, more rooms for workshops and more banquet space.

After an extensive search through the state, and keeping in mind driving time, available lodging rooms close by the conference venue, cost to those who attended and continued growth in learning and entertainment - we were fortunate enough to put together a team from The Residence Inn (Marriott), Hollywood Casino Hotel, and the Cross Insurance Center/Bangor Civic Center plus Lougee & Frederick's Florist, the newly organized Maine YP team, and the Northern Maine Fair board that created table centerpieces that featured both USA 250 AND the Wonderful World of Poultry. Each year more vendors have been contacting MAAF to request a spot at the conference.

Breakfast and lunch meals are offered, through MAAF, at no cost, making it easier for fairs to consider the additional expense of traveling. National level keynote speakers are joining the conference and Fairs Helping Fairs is outgrowing its space.

To all of you who have been on this journey over the past 100 years (actually only Bill McFarland has been around that long!) thanks for helping us grow, for helping us help each other to become an extraordinary organization that is guiding Maine fairs to become well known across the country, just ask anyone who attends the annual International Association of Fairs and Expos Convention. Join us in Allentown, Pennsylvania April 9-11 or consider November 29-December 3 for the 136th IAFE Convention in Louisville, at the Kentucky International Convention Center. Look in this newsletter for scholarship funds available to attend these events or ask some of the folks who traveled there last year - Peter Chase, Ashley Laduke, Dave Richardson. This is an opportunity to brag up our state and make new connections, get new ideas and just have some fantastic fair fun!

Junia Norris

**MANY THANKS TO JOE SHAW
FOR MAAF CONFERENCE 2025 PHOTOGRAPHY!**



**2025 MAAF AG
AWARD WINNERS
CREATING AN EXPERIENCE:
YOUTH IN AGRICULTURE**

***Category 1: Agricultural experiences designed for children and by children
Division 1: Fairs operating for four concurrent days or less
Winner : Harmony Free Fair AG-tivity Area***

The AG-tivity area at the Harmony Free Fair offered ongoing crafts, contests, and educational demonstrations for fairgoers of all ages . Fairgoers were encouraged to stop by throughout the fair to participate in hands-on

activities and sign up for contests . Starting on Friday August 29th, the fair planning team encouraged local students to look over a selection of farm-themed books and create a poster based on a book that they have previously read or create a silly poster about an animal such as “My Dream Animal”. Posters were separated by age group, displayed, and voted on. The poster winners could receive a ribbon, a 2025 Harmony Free Fair t-shirt and” bragging rights!” Other activities throughout the weekend were a scavenger hunt, Pin the Tire on the Tractor, Goat Chats, a Touch Tank, a Frog Jumping contest and much more. The planning team for this agricultural experience leaned heavily on youth to design , operate and critique their program as well as attend what they had - - and even invited local farmers to be a guests, sharing their knowledge, and answering any questions . Parents actively stayed with their children in the AG-tivity area during events and interacted with them.



Category 1. Agricultural experiences designed for children and by children

Division 2: Fairs operating for five concurrent days or more

Winner: Cumberland County Fair

Cumberland County Fair leaned on the enthusiasm and knowledge of not only their 4-H leaders and volunteers, but the 4-H members themselves. Sharing their experiences, these youth answered the following questions: What is your favorite part about being a youth in agriculture? Why do you feel that it is important to educate the public on agriculture? How has being involved in agriculture impacted your future plans? 25 youth submitted responses with accompanying photos of each and a poster was made for each response. Two copies of each

poster were printed and prominently displayed throughout the fairgrounds. “We had a full wall of these posters and 4-H members with projects from goats to dairy cattle to rabbits to steers to sheep to beef cattle to swine submitted answers and their posters were proudly displayed near their respective commodities. Six activities were hosted by youth during the week for fairgoers to take part in. Topics included butter making, wool bracelets, planting a seed, yoke & goad stick making, cow meet & greet, and rabbit meet & greet. Despite losing the time allotted for yoke and goad stick making, the working steer youth did demonstrate their unique skills multiple times during the week during the fair from their barn.”

Cumberland Fair's Youth In Agriculture



Alivia T.



Why do you feel it is important to educate the public about agriculture?

I believe it is important to educate the public on agriculture because not everyone is aware of small commercial farms. It is important to let people know where their food comes from, and how that process happens. It is influential to know that this term is often mistaken for just gardening and farming, but it's so much greater. Agriculture is the center of food sources around the world. Farming and gardening are huge factors, but it's important to recognize how many branches lead to agriculture. Whether that be horticulture, soil science, agricultural engineering, entomology, plant pathology, forestry, and many many more. They are all extremely important.



MAAF SCHOLARSHIP & GRANT OPPORTUNITIES

At the MAAF Conference we shared the list below of all our scholarship and grant opportunities for 2026.

NOTE - The MAAF Zone 1 Scholarship Deadline has been extended to March 10, 2026. 10 Scholarships still available!

Learn more and apply on our website maaffound.com and follow along on our new Facebook page to get reminders about deadlines!

FMI: **Hope Ricker**, hersec96@aol.com



Scholarship & Grant Opportunities

Learn more at
www.MAAFFound.com



Student Scholarships

MAAF Foundation awards at least two \$2000.00 Scholarships annually

DEADLINE: Applications accepted January 1 - April 15, 2026

ELIGIBILITY: Applicants must be a graduating high school senior pursuing post-secondary education in an

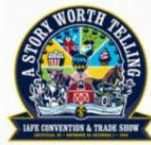


IAFE Zone 1 Meeting Scholarship

MAAF Foundation will award up to three \$250 grants annually to offset registration expenses to attend the IAFE Zone One Conference

DEADLINE: Apply by February 28, 2026

Deadline extended to
March 10, 2026 !!



IAFE Annual Convention Scholarship

MAAF Foundation will award up to four \$2500 grants annually to offset registration, airfare, and accommodations to attend the IAFE Annual Convention

DEADLINE: Apply by August 31, 2026



GOAL Scholarship

This program made possible via contributions from Maine Independent Vendors. Awards will be up to \$500 grants to offset registration and travel expenses to attend the 2026 Zone 1 or IAFE Annual Convention.

DEADLINE: Apply by February 6, 2026



Ag Education Grant

MAAF Foundation will award grants up to \$2500 to assist with funding projects to grow agricultural knowledge of fair patrons.

DEADLINE: Apply by March 15, 2026

MAAF FOUNDATION REPORT

THANK YOU for your generosity at the Annual Conference! With your support, we raised over \$14,500 for the MAAF Foundation Scholarship Programs: Auction - \$12,655 50/50 - \$1058 Donations - \$840. Thank you to all who bought tickets, donated items, bid at the Auction, and made donations to the foundation. A big shout out and thank you to Dick Brown and his crew from Litchfield Fair who always make the Auction a fun and entertaining time. Thanks go out also to Steve and Liza Graustein for doing the computer work and assisting us with the Auction and to the Benner "girls" Lexi and Taylor for selling a lot of 50/50 tickets. Congratulations to Farmington Fair member Marcus Rowe for winning the 50/50.



The Foundation Annual Meeting was held on Saturday at the Conference. Re-elected to serve another 3 year term on the Board of Directors were Peter Connell and Sadee Mehuren. The Officers for the Foundation were re-elected: President Hope Ricker, Secretary Sarah Littlefield and Treasurer Jessica Benner. Check out our website Maaffound.com for exciting news about our scholarship and grant opportunities. The deadline for applications for Zone 1 is February 28, the Agriculture Education Program is March 15 and the High School Scholarship is April 15.

Further information for all of these programs is available on the MAAF Foundation website. For information on the GOALS Grant Program contact Junia Norris at junianorris@gmail.com

INFO FOR YOU - IAFE CONTEST DIVISION CHANGES

Read full article [here](#).

MAINE YOUNG PROFESSIONALS GROUP REFLECTS ON THE 2026 MAAF CONFERENCE

The Young Professionals group all agreed that the 2026 MAAF annual conference was hands down the best one yet! The new location brought a fun, fresh vibe that made the whole event feel exciting from start to finish. We had an awesome turnout, which made networking and reconnecting with everyone even better. The workshops were actually engaging and useful, not just something that you sit through. - people left feeling inspired and ready to put what they learned into action. The set up made it easy to move around, connect and enjoy everything that the conference had to offer. But the best part by far, was seeing so many younger professionals jump in and get involved. The energy, new ideas and enthusiasm they brought made this year unforgettable and set the tone for even bigger and better things ahead. Many of us are already planning and looking forward to the next conference in 2027! FMI - Madison Chadbourne, madison.w.chadbourne@gmail.com



2026 MAAF AGRICULTURAL AWARD CONTEST "CREATING AN EXPERIENCE: THE WONDERFUL WORLD OF POULTRY

Category 1 - Agricultural Experiences designed for children and by children. These experiences will include information, demonstrations and appropriate hands on activities which introduce children to and educate them to

the world of POULTRY. Domesticated birds raised for their meat, eggs or feathers - which includes chickens, ducks, turkeys, geese, guinea fowl, pigeons, ostriches and pheasants. *Please indicate if your fair has a pre-existing hands-on ag education program designed for children.

Category 2 - Agricultural experiences for ALL fairgoers that educate fairgoers about poultry - identify them, how to raise them, creative recipes using poultry/eggs and many other activities. This can be a one day program or ongoing throughout your fair.

Division 1: Fairs operating for four concurrent days or less

Division 2: Fairs operating for five concurrent days or more



MAAF AWARD Application:

A brief description of your events(s) and the connection to Maine agriculture. Specifically, the World of Poultry.

Who was involved in the planning/funding process? - i.e, individuals, community organizations, agencies, businesses, educators, youth, sponsors, etc - and the roles they played.

What challenges did you face and how did you address them?

How did the public react to your event? - personal feedback, hits on your website, survey money results, photos of interactions during your event?

How was your event promoted? - print and social media, posters, school, local radio and promotional programs prior and during the event

REMEMBER - YOUR GOAL IS TO HELP FAIRGOERS IDENTIFY THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN A CHICKEN AND A DUCK!!

Judging

*Each element will be evaluated on a scale of 1-5

1 = no evidence presented

2 = Minimal evidence of involvement presented

3 = Evidence of involvement presented

4 = Evidence of involvement is thorough and comprehensive

5 = Evidence of in-person community involvement during the fair dates - demonstrations, discussions/interviews, hands-on food preparation, availability of farmers/growers etc.

Applications may be submitted in digital form as well as traditional pen and paper.

Mail applications to: MAAF P.O. Box 3 Union, Maine 04862, 207-462-0856

Applications must be postmarked no later than October 31, 2026

FMI: Junia Norris

UPCOMING IMPORTANT DATES

The **Zone 1 meeting** is April 9-11 in Breiningsville,PA which is near Allentown. More info can be found on the IAFE website. There are scholarships and grants to help those who wish to attend.

The **136th IAFE Convention** runs November 29-December 3 in Louisville, at the Kentucky International Convention Center.

NEWSLETTERS BROUGHT TO YOU BY:

Junia Norris, MAAF Newsletter Editor
Rachel Andrews Damon, MAAF Newsletter Media

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2021-May/June	2023-July	2026-March
2021-July/August	2023-September	
2021-September/October	2023-November/December	
2021-September/October Addendum	2024-January/February	
2021-November/December	2024-March/April	
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