MAINE ASSOCIATION OF AGRICULTURAL FAIRS

FALL 2026 NEWSLETTER

Hello Fair Family,

As Maine's 2026 fair season wraps up, we're proud to share the stories that capture what our fairs are all about — honoring the women shaping Maine agriculture, celebrating our Young Professionals, recognizing a volunteer whose fifty-plus years of service are the backbone of a fairground, and introducing the next generation of agricultural leaders through this year's scholarship recipients.

FROM THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

A Message from Barry

Fall is upon us and our fair season is coming to a close. You all need to be proud of the great agricultural experience you gave to fair goers this fair season. Except for weather related issues it appears the season was a successful one.

The conference committee has been hard at work preparing a great educational event again, hope many of you can attend. See the information further in the newsletter. I'd like to thank the fairs that participated in the Year of the Women in Agriculture, look for their banners at the Conference.

Again thank you all for all you do to provide the fair guest a wonderful experience at your fairs. I look forward to seeing many of you at the conference in January.

> It is with sadness that I report Brad Lunt, Fred's son, contacted me and informed me of his father's passing on Oct. 29th. Services for Fred will be held on November 14th at 10:00 AM at the United Methodist Church, 36 Church St., Clinton, Me. Brad will be providing me with a full obituary, which I'll pass along, once received. Respectfully.

— Barry, Executive Director

SPECIAL RECOGNITION

Year of the Woman Farmer in the State of Maine

2026 has been proclaimed as the Year of the Woman Farmer in Maine. This designation aligns with the United Nations designation of the International Year of Woman Farmers and led nationally by the National Association of State Departments of Agriculture. During the Maine Ag Commissioner's Luncheon at the January Ag Trade Show, Commissioner Amanda Beal shared that through 2026 Maine will highlight women farmers and agricultural leaders.

> *"The Governor's proclamation is an opportunity to honor woman farmers, past and present, and future farmers, especially the young women entering agriculture, and further position Maine as a national leader in advancing opportunity and innovation in agriculture."*
>
> — Amanda Beal, Maine Agriculture Commissioner

Each Maine agricultural fair is being encouraged to select a woman in agriculture from their geographic area to receive this recognition. A current photograph and brief bio will be displayed at each fair as the fair shares this special recognition for our women farmers. Each fair will determine how to additionally recognize their choice during the fair.

Following the close of our fair season in October, the photographs and information from all 25 women will be gathered together and a large informational banner will be created. The intent is that this banner will be displayed at the 2027 Maine Association of Agricultural Fairs conference in Bangor at the Cross Center at the end of January. There will be additional opportunities to display this banner at agriculture-related events throughout the coming year.

Meet Darcy Winslow — High View Farm, Harrison



For over 20 years, Darcy has been building High View Farm in Harrison, growing what began with a single cow into a successful micro dairy. She is involved in nearly every part of the operation, from milking to processing to cheesemaking. But her commitment to Maine agriculture extends well beyond her own farm.

As 1st Vice President of the Maine Fairs – MAAF, Darcy works to keep agriculture at the heart of Maine's fairs and help people understand the farmers behind their food. She is also deeply involved

with the Waterford World's Fair and serves as Treasurer of the Bridgton Farmers' Market, helping maintain an important marketplace for local farmers and producers.

Through each of these roles, Darcy is working toward the same goal: keeping Maine agriculture strong and creating opportunities for the next generation of farmers.

We celebrate Darcy Winslow for the time, energy, and leadership she gives to Maine agriculture beyond its gates.

YOUTH TODAY. STRONGER FAIRS TOMORROW.

MAAF Young Professionals

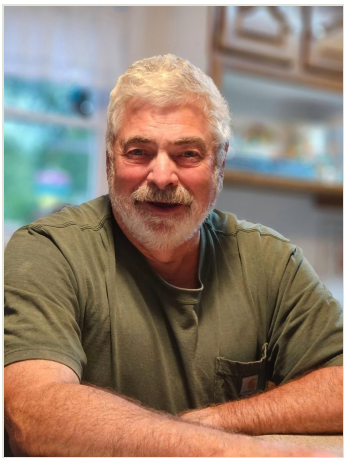
You may have noticed the MAAF Young Professionals Group has been a little quiet lately—but don't mistake quiet for gone! Behind the scenes, we're working to build a group that's meaningful, engaging, and worth being a part of. Our goal is to connect young professionals from across the region, create opportunities to learn from one another, and help develop the next generation of leaders in the fair industry. We're excited about what's ahead and can't wait to share updates.

We're also looking forward to the 2026 IAFE Annual Convention in Louisville, Kentucky, November 29th–December 3rd! It's a great opportunity to learn, network, and bring back new ideas to our fairs. We hope to see many of you there!

VOLUNTEER SPOTLIGHT

These Shoes Will Be Hard to Fill

Brandon Roope • Northern Maine Fair



For Brandon Roope, the Fair is a Lifelong Passion

For Brandon Roope, the fair is more than just an event; it's a passion and a long-standing tradition that has been part of his life for over 50 years. His involvement began in the early 1970s, and since then, there are few places on the fairgrounds he hasn't touched—and even fewer things he doesn't know!

A Life Rooted in Agriculture

Agriculture has been central to Brandon's life. Alongside his brother

Bruce, he was the third generation to manage their family's farm in Presque Isle, a legacy dating back to the 1920s. They farmed around 450 acres along the Aroostook River, primarily growing potatoes for processing. Though the family farm has been sold, agriculture remains integral to Brandon's story.

Throughout his lifetime, Brandon witnessed significant changes in farming. Equipment grew larger, technology advanced, and tasks that once required many hands could be done by a few. Despite these changes, the Roope family upheld a tradition of perseverance, modernization, and optimism.

A Pillar of the Fair Community

These same qualities have made Brandon an invaluable part of the fair for many years. For over 25 years, he ran a transfer sled for the truck and tractor pulls. Even when the demands of the family farm limited his participation, he never truly stayed away.

When asked what drew him back each year, Brandon's answer was simple: "It was always about the fair family and volunteers." For the past 15 years, as head of maintenance, Brandon has been the go-to person for any question at the fairgrounds.

> Need to locate a water line? *Ask Brandon.*
> Sewer line? *Brandon probably knows.*
> Electrical line? *Better find Brandon.*
> Historical details about the fairgrounds? *Brandon likely remembers.*

Despite his reluctance to be "in charge," he became the indispensable source for all things at the Northern Maine Fairgrounds. Brandon's expertise extends beyond what's underground. He has attended every Baby Beef Auction for over 50 years. He even mastered the art of properly hanging quilts in the Ag Exhibition Hall.

Beyond the Fairgrounds

Brandon's contributions to agriculture extend beyond his family's farm. He has served the community through organizations like the Maine Potato Board and the National Potato Council. The Roope family's dedication was recognized in 2008 when they were named Maine Farm Family of the Year.

While farming along the Aroostook River, Brandon implemented conservation practices to protect the land, including erosion-control systems and preservation of wetlands. These efforts aimed to safeguard water quality and wildlife habitat.

A Legacy of Dedication

Today, you might find Brandon mowing, making maple syrup, hunting, fishing, or spending part of the Maine winter in warmer Florida. After more than five decades, his contributions to the fair are immeasurable. His knowledge, experience, and helpful nature are woven into the fabric of the fairgrounds.

Brandon was recently honored at the Northern Maine Fair volunteer appreciation supper.

Thank you, Brandon, for over 50 years of dedication. Your

shoes will be hard to fill, and your impact will be felt for many years to come.

RETROSPECTIVE

You Make THE Difference



Ian Hill

“We believe that the iconic county fair is not a relic of the past, but a vital community institution for the future”.....this transformative workshop was presented to fair boards across the state. Cohosted by Skowhegan, along with Harmony, Clinton, Farmington, Windsor and North New Portland... Fryeburg, Acton, Bangor, and their guests...Houlton and their amazing crew at the Elks Club - everyone heard Ian challenge them to consider that the future of their community depended on how they responded to the critical moments facing fair boards today.

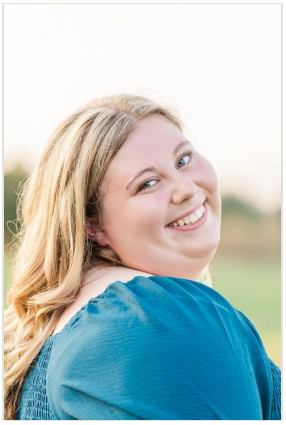
People learned strategies for success, the importance of recognizing those in the fair community that may too often go unnoticed - embracing that we fair folks are truly the stewards of this valuable program. The Difference Makers who keep our communities alive. The importance of recognizing the generational handoff that is so important to all of our fairs. The sponsors who support financially as well as in person. Fairs were encouraged to recognize individuals who “make a difference” throughout the year by mentioning them in posts on Facebook, a shout out in their newsletter, and posted signs throughout their fairgrounds.

If you were able to attend one of the Maine workshops, or perhaps you were at the January conference and heard Ian Hill challenge all present, think back to what you learned, what was truly meaningful to you and how you implemented some of the many strategies. Because you truly can make a difference !

INVESTING IN THE FUTURE

2026 MAAF Foundation Scholarship Recipients

Congratulations to this year's scholarship recipients! These outstanding students represent the future of Maine agriculture, and we could not be prouder of their accomplishments in and out of the show ring.



Delaney Dutton

FRYEBURG FAIR

A dedicated student with deep roots in Maine agriculture, Delaney plans to study animal science at the University of Connecticut with the goal of a career in beef cattle nutrition and genetics. Raised on a multigenerational family farm and actively involved in 4-H for nearly eight years, she is committed to strengthening the beef industry in New England. Her lifelong connection to the Fryeburg Fair, along with participation in fairs across Maine, reflects a passion for agricultural traditions and youth livestock programs. Through leadership roles in 4-H, National Honor Society, FFA, and student government she has demonstrated a strong commitment to agriculture, service, and leadership both in and out of the show ring.



Demetria Nicholas

MAINE AGRICULTURAL FAIRS

Demetria is a lifelong animal enthusiast and plans to attend the University of Maine to study animal and veterinary science with the goal of becoming a large animal veterinarian. Inspired by years of involvement with Maine agricultural fairs and 4-H dairy goat showing, Demetria developed a strong work ethic, resilience, and passion for animal care. Showing goats at Maine agricultural fairs gave Demetria an opportunity to pursue her passion for animals despite not growing up on a farm. As a three-sport varsity athlete, member of the Latin Honor Society, and youth track coach, she has balanced academics, athletics, work, and community service while demonstrating dedication to serving both animals and their community.



Callie Baker

MAINE AGRICULTURAL FAIRS

Callie plans to attend the University of Maine to study animal and veterinary science before pursuing a veterinary degree at Atlantic Veterinary College. She has aspirations to one day open a large animal veterinary practice that mobile farm and visits to better serve rural communities. Through involvement with Maine agricultural fairs, the Down East Border Riders Saddle Club, the National Barrel Horse Association, and extensive work and volunteer experience caring for animals, she has demonstrated a strong commitment to agriculture, horsemanship, and community service.



Elias Kruk

COMMON GROUND FAIR

Elias plans to pursue a degree in environmental science and marine biology with the goal of combining scientific knowledge with his family's farming operation to promote sustainable agriculture and environmental stewardship. Raised on a farm where he helps grow crops, raise beef cattle and chickens, produce maple syrup, and sell pumpkins, he is deeply connected to Maine's agricultural heritage. Through showing dairy cattle, participating in the Common Ground Fair, and supporting horse-drawn farming demonstrations, he has developed a strong appreciation for Maine's agricultural fairs and traditions. A dedicated student-athlete and community volunteer, Elias is committed to strengthening both his local community and the future of sustainable agriculture in Maine.



Madison Brazier

NORTHERN MAINE FAIR

Madison plans to attend the University of Maine to study animal and veterinary science. While working as a veterinary technician, she plans to continue her education toward becoming a veterinarian. A dedicated member of Maine FFA for four years, Madison has volunteered at the Northern Maine Fair and has been actively involved in her school and community through FFA, the Outdoor Club, and coaching at her local recreation center.



Annabelle Harnden

MAINE AGRICULTURAL FAIRS

This fall Annabelle will attend Southern Maine Community College where she plans to earn an associate degree in horticulture. After completing her education, she plans to open her own florist shop. Her lifelong love of Maine agricultural fairs began through 4-H swine showing and continues today through exhibiting the flowers she grows. In addition to dancing and running a roadside flower stand, Annabelle is active in FFA and National Honor Society.



Jayden Gardner

WASHINGTON COUNTY FAIR

After graduation Jayden will attend Mars Hill University to study ecology and conservation biology and pre-veterinary science while competing as a division II soccer player. Aspiring to build a career in wildlife conservation and animal welfare, Jayden hopes to return to Maine to protect its natural resources, agricultural communities, and wildlife while eventually establishing a nonprofit animal rescue. Through leadership in 4-H, volunteer service at the Washington County Fair, experience raising Nigerian dwarf goats, and studies in sustainable agriculture and horticulture, she has demonstrated a strong commitment to conservation, agriculture, youth leadership, and community service.

A STORY WORTH TELLING

IAFE Convention Scholarship Recipients

Congratulations to the MAAF Foundation recipients who will travel to Louisville, KY this November to attend the IAFE Convention & Trade Show:

Sarah Littlefield	Fryeburg Fair
Elizabeth Graustein	Waterford World's Fair
William Winslow	Waterford World's Fair
Chad Caldwell	Bangor State Fair
Carol Doughty	Ossipee Valley Fair
Mickenzie Prentiss	Skowhegan State Fair
Madison Chadbourne	Harmony Free Fair
Ashley LaDuke	The Springfield Fair
Peter Chase	Windsor Fair

2026 MAAF AGRICULTURAL AWARD CONTEST

Creating an Experience: The Wonderful World of Poultry

This year's MAAF Agricultural Award Contest challenges fairs to create hands-on experiences that introduce fairgoers to the world of poultry — chickens, ducks, turkeys, geese, guinea fowl, pigeons, ostriches and pheasants.

Two categories:

Category 1: Agricultural experiences designed for children and by children — information, demonstrations, and hands-on activities that educate kids about poultry.

Category 2: Agricultural experiences for all fairgoers — identification, raising tips, creative poultry and egg recipes, and more. Can run one day or throughout your fair.

Divisions are split by fair length (four concurrent days or less / five or more), and entries are judged on planning, community involvement, public reaction, and promotion.

> *"Remember — your goal is to help fairgoers identify the difference between a chicken and a duck!"*

Applications may be submitted digitally or by mail to MAAF, P.O. Box 3, Union, Maine 04862 • 207-462-0856, and must be postmarked no later than **October 31, 2026**. For more information, contact Junia Norris.

Maine Association of Agricultural Fairs

Celebrating Maine’s fair traditions, volunteers, and the next generation of agricultural leaders.

You are receiving this email as a valued member of the MAAF fair family.