

Fair highlights what makes El Dorado County special

By Kathryn Reed

PLACERVILLE – *“Look at me as if I’m the judge.”*

“You have to look like you want to win.”

“A big point will be how hot it will be. We need to bring squirt bottles.”

All of these words of wisdom are from Marcia Deane, swine project leader.



Do they know what's next after they are judged at the El Dorado County Fair? Photos/Kathryn Reed

Before the El Dorado County Fair opened she and her charges were practicing Wednesday for today's judging. It's all about the 4-H kids today, whereas on Thursday the pigs were being judged for their meat.

Deane was trying to instill confidence in these youngsters who range in age from 9 to 19. For most, this fair is the first time they've been in an arena with one of their animals under the scrutiny of professional judges.

The swine weigh between 215 and 280 pounds. One of the girls leading around a pig looked like she weighed about 70 pounds.

A sneak preview Wednesday night of this annual event in Placerville showed a different side of the fair than what people will see for the next three days. (The fair is June 14-17.)

Vendors are putting up their displays in the exhibit halls. Boxes full of stuffed animals are being unloaded as rewards in the games of chance. Lights from the midway are twinkling, but the carnival sounds are not on.

But what can't be turned off is the baying of goats, the oinks of pigs and moos of cows.

It wouldn't be a county fair without the farm animals. While Tahoe doesn't have much in the way of farming anymore, cattle rustling and cowboys are a strong part of the basin's history.

On the other side of the county farm life is thriving. What's going on is not a throwback to a different era, but instead is a way of life for people on the West Slope.

Shanley Bruscano, 12, is feeding alfalfa to her myriad goats. This makes their milk taste better than if they were to eat grass.

Her mom, Tammy, explains how they raise a variety of goats on their 10 acres in Shingle Springs.

"The goats are not grazers, they are browsers. They don't like grasses," Tammy Bruscano said.

All have registered papers, and are tattooed or microchipped to comply with judging regulations.

"It's just like a dog show. It's very intense," Bruscano said.

This year's theme is The Grapest Show on Earth. A number of

wine events are part of the festivities.

“The theme is always to share something special about El Dorado County,” county Supervisor Norma Santiago says while she sits with *Lake Tahoe News* on preview night. This year it’s the county’s 53 wineries that are being highlighted.

Tom Davis, South Lake Tahoe city councilman and fair board director, is also at the table. He brings a trailer down each year and sleeps nearby the carnies for the four-day event.

One of Davis’ favorite events is the wheelbarrow race. (June 17, 5pm) This is the 68th year for the John M. Studebaker Wheelbarrow Race. After all, Studebaker started in Placerville manufacturing wheelbarrows.

All ages can compete, but it takes some strength to put the wheelbarrow over logs, with what could be 50 pounds of sand, then through neck-high water, in mud – oh, and it’s supposed to be 94 degrees in Placerville on Sunday.

It’s also a spectator sport, so to speak.

“It’s brutal,” Davis said of the course.

--

Notes:

- El Dorado Transit is offering free shuttle service for the El Dorado County Fair from 11:30am to midnight today, 9:30am to midnight Saturday and 11:30am to 10:30pm Sunday. For detailed information, go online or call (530) 642.5383.

- More information is on the fair’s website.

ngg_shortcode_0_placeholder (Click on photos to enlarge.)

