



MEDIA RELEASE

TENNESSEE DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE
MARKET DEVELOPMENT DIVISION

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
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FAIR WINNERS NAMED AT ANNUAL CONVENTION

NASHVILLE - The Middle Tennessee District Fair in Lawrenceburg was named state Champion of Champions Fair for 2008 and numerous other fair awards were announced during the 87th annual Tennessee Association of Fairs convention held Jan. 15-17 in Nashville.

The annual awards are sponsored by the Tennessee Department of Agriculture and the Tennessee Association of Fairs, the state organization representing Tennessee's fair industry.

State Agriculture Commissioner Ken Givens presented the awards at the Merit Awards dinner at the Nashville Airport Marriott, attended by more than 900 fair managers, community leaders and volunteers. Fifty-four of the state's top county agricultural fairs were recognized with the Merit Award for outstanding achievement during the 2008 fair season.

"Fairs are a valuable part of the agricultural industry by showcasing the best our farms and agribusinesses have to offer," said Givens. "There's a long tradition of cooperation between fairs and the agricultural community. We're especially excited that we were able to assist several fairs this past year to upgrade, build and preserve agricultural facilities at fairgrounds through the Agricultural Enhancement program."

The Middle Tennessee District Fair was also recognized by Givens and TAF President Paul Finley with the "Award of Merit" based on overall operations, educational value and promotion of local interest in agriculture and community spirit.

In other awards, the Overton County Fair was named Champion in *Division A*; Dyer County Fair was named Champion in *Division AA*; and the Putnam County Fair was named Champion in *Division AAA*. In other *Division A* awards, 1st Runner-Up honors went to the Morgan County Fair, 2nd Runner-up to White County Fair and Most Improved to the Houston County Fair

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In *Division AA*, 1st Runner-up was awarded to the Lincoln County Fair, 2nd runner-up to the Obion County Fair and Most Improved to the Henry County Fair.

In *Division AAA*, 1st Runner-up went to the West Tennessee State Fair (Jackson), 2nd Runner-up to the Anderson County Fair and the Most Improved to the Foothills Country Fair (Cleveland).

In Premiere Awards, which recognizes top fairs from the previous year's winners, the Fentress County Fair was named Champion of Champions. The DeKalb County Fair and Coffee County Fair received the Premiere Award in the *Division A* and *Division AAA* categories respectively.

In 2008, nearly 3.2 million visitors attended the county and regional agricultural fairs in Tennessee. Fairs in Tennessee generated more than \$13 million in gross receipts in 2008. An estimated 13,000 volunteers from 64 fairs in the state devoted time and energy to fairs which had more than 31,000 agricultural exhibitors showcasing livestock, farm crops and other agricultural exhibits.

The 11th Annual Fair Showcase competition held during the convention consisted of 435 entries from fairs in 40 different categories. Fairs competed for prize money, trophies and ribbons sponsored by the TDA and TAF. Categories ranged from fair catalogs, websites and educational displays, to fair shirts, posters, scrapbooks, creative ideas and table-top exhibits.

The 2009 Tennessee fair dates will be listed soon on TDA's Market Development Web site at www.picktnproducts.org. The 88th annual convention of the Tennessee Association of Fairs will be Jan. 14-16, 2010 in Nashville.

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News from the Tennessee Department of Agriculture can be found at TN.gov/agriculture
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