

Thank you, AJ!

And thank you to all of the attendees tonight, to all the volunteers, artists, restaurateurs and entertainers that made our event a success, and to the candidates that are running for the Board of Directors.

The dress I am wearing has a story. It was handmade by an Oregon Country Fair artist. I bought it second hand from a Saturday Market Member, who is also an Oregon Country Fair member. I only wear it for special occasions, so thank for the opportunity to wear it tonight.

The State of our Peach is getting stronger as we rebound from the pandemic. 2023's event showed that we are regaining our footing. Our financial position is stable because of the grants we received. They allowed us to have enough funds to start this year's event on a solid financial foundation. Next year our event will solidify our successful rebound. Our trajectory will be back on course and then we can begin to address the long-term projects that are needed to sustain and improve the event.

We have many investments that need to be made over the next 10 years that will help our beloved annual Fair. Here are some of the projects we need to focus on:

First, rebuilding our water system. This is a 5-year project. Year one will increase the water storage capacity by 10,000 gallons. Years two through five are the investment in rebuilding the system by quadrants. Included in this, we will add communications to expand our wifi throughout the 8. This will benefit the booths and the public.

Second, we must invest in site equipment that supports the staff and volunteers and the work they do year-round.

A new truck and tractor are needed. Our main truck has come to the end of its life for transporting things to and from site and the John Deere tractor has been sold as it costs more to fix it than it is worth. Our site is our home and we have to have the tools needed to care for it.

Third, alternative transportation during Main Camp and the Fair. Every year we add more gators and golf carts and it is unsustainable. We have a carbon neutral goal that we have to work towards. Investing in bicycles, both electric

and human powered, with trailers to transport supplies around the site, will move us forward in reaching our carbon neutral goal. It is imperative that we reduce our impact on the land and the environment.

Fourth, an invasive species called the Emerald ash borer beetle, will likely destroy all of our ash trees. We will be tasked with removal and replanting of native species.

Much work is being done to plan for the affects this will have on our land and event. This will be a big loss, but we must try and find the silver lining that it will give us the opportunity to create a new vision for how we use the

areas in the NCU with a focus on health and safety, ingress and egress, new event space and new camping space. It will take all of us, working together, to create the shared vision of what our Fair will be in the future.

Fifth, Composting. The compost site is almost completely prepped and ready for the concrete to be poured. Once complete, the next phase is to have a barn structure built over the slab.

Sixth, portable toilets. We need to invest in owning more of them so we reduce our rental needs and expense. I believe we can accomplish this over the next 3 years.

Seventh, Main Camp kitchen. We need to invest in portable kitchens. The wear and tear on the equipment from transporting it every year makes the life expectancy much shorter than it would normally be. If we put mobile kitchens in Main Camp we could reduce the expense associated with repair and replacement of equipment and the savings would be realized over 5 years.

These are a significant portion of the necessary improvements that we will focus on to ensure long-term, operational support of the event.

These investments are part of a greater scope. We continue to look closely at our capacity and ask what should it look like. Our internal size, public size, impact on the land and participant enjoyment should be front and center in these conversations. It is through these conversations that we build partnership with each other and our broader community.

Land stewardship, as mentioned, is a top priority. Erosion and its effects on path planning, water use, waste reduction, alternative energy, all require our attention. Our ultimate purpose is the sustainability of our land and event for the next 50 years.

Positive communication is integral in becoming allies in the outcomes we seek. Membership and volunteerism are the bedrock of the organization and we must nurture our relationships. It is the voice of the membership and volunteers through voting and contributing in committees that drives our success. You help educate, train and develop the organization to meet its potential.

Philanthropy is an essential part of our mission and it nourishes our souls through giving back to our neighbors. It is the why for what we do for the Fair. You are change makers!

Our philanthropy comes from the revenue we generate.

The Fair is the biggest fundraiser, but we also receive between \$50-100k per year from generous donors and we appreciate them. But we can always use more donations.

We have great programs that need your support, like KOCF, Culture Jam and the Jill Heinman Vision fund.

These are meaningful to our community and I hope you will consider making a donation.

We have a legacy of 54 years of Fair magic that was built by our elders. We must encourage our youth to carry it forward by empowering them through connection with the

knowledge base and experience of our elders. Together they represent our past carrying into the future.

Looking towards the future, we are developing a new information system that incorporates advancements, such as taking credit cards for inventory, and it will take a group effort to make the transition successful. We anticipate it being rolled out in March 2024. Additionally, we are focusing on timely notifications of meetings to encourage participation. The diversity of voices in our committees and meetings strengthens us. As a bottom-up organization, the more communication we have among us, the more we strengthen our dedication to inclusivity.

As a community that celebrates and supports alternative lifestyles, it is our nature to be progressive thinkers. We have to encourage change, embrace non-conformity and celebrate diversity. We have more in common than what separates us. If we focus on the common threads between us, we can change the world.

It is an honor and a privilege to serve as your Executive Director. I have engaged in many creative conversations with volunteers that advance our collective. I have participated in authentic communication, empathic listening and creative solutions. I appreciate the

opportunity I have been given and I work tirelessly to help us achieve our mission.

Please cast your vote for the Board of Directors by October 21st at 8pm at the Eugene office. The elections committee will tally the votes on October 22nd and post the results to the .net site as soon as they are known.

Thank you to the Get out the Vote crew for hosting the Candidate Forum on October 1st and the elections committee for their hard work making the annual election run smoothly.

Check out the .org site and buy some merch for your friends and family. We have the entire collection of Fair posters for sale there, plus select items from this year's Fair that sold out. We are also promoting an end of year tax deductible donation campaign. Please make a donation, if you are able.

I want to share a small excerpt from a piece written by Bill Wooten, one of the founders of Oregon Country Fair, titled Oregon Country Fair: The Early Years. The section is titled Community by Choice:

This is a community by choice of reason rather than by the chance of birth. Reason is found more each day on the side of cooperation, conversation, and community.

Reason stands with those who reduce their wants and simplify their needs, who lessen demands upon the world's resources. Reason stands with those who do not ask the world to do for them, what they can do for themselves. Reason stands with those who treat neighbors as friends, friends as brothers and sisters and this earth as our one and only home. Let us stand together. It stands to reason, to endure is to prevail.

Thank you for being a community by choice!

Lastly, I want to thank the employees and Back-up

Managers who work hard to support our volunteers. They

are commitment to being of service to our organization. If

you feel the same appreciation I do, please take a moment

and express your gratitude to them. It takes all of us to

make the magic happen!

With much love and respect for all of you and your

contributions, thank you and here's to a great 2024 Fair!