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Photo submitted by Markham Fair, Markham, Ontario



Sunderland Fall Fair

NESTLED IN THE ROLLING HILLS and rambling pastures of Brock Township is the home of the Sunderland Fall Fair, the oldest fair in Ontario's Durham Region. This fair's origin is traced to 1851, when a rural school fair combined with a farm exhibition in a celebration of the community's rural history, culture and values. Throughout its 161 years, the fair has stayed true to its roots and mission in its "promotion of agriculture and rural life".

The Sunderland Fall Fair is a mid-week event providing one of the great social gatherings of the year drawing spectators and participants from far and wide. The children from the two local elementary schools are excused from class to march in the parade and compete in various challenges. The parade be-

gins at Sunderland Public School where the judging of floats, costumes and decorated bicycles takes place and ends in front of the grandstand on the fair grounds where the school cheer competition is judged. Literacy contests as well as baking and craft exhibitions can be viewed in the arena. The spelling bee, in both English and French, tests the skills and highlights the abilities of our future leaders. Classes exclusive to young exhibitors allow children to showcase the flowers and vegetables that they have nurtured during the summer.

Local 4-H beef and dairy clubs hold their achievement days at the fair to the delight of our young farmers. The 4-H Motorheads vie for top honours with their "tweaked" lawn tractors providing lots of action and noise in the tractor pull competition.

The giant vegetable produce is amazing! In the arena, specimens of corn stalks touch the ceiling. Pumpkins weigh in at over 1000 pounds and root crops are gargantuan.

Horse lovers will delight in their visit to the fair. The light horse show has a large following. Competitors travel long distances to participate in this event's wide-ranging demonstration of showmanship and horsemanship. The heavy horse show is a two day affair. The horse pull occurs on Tuesday night and the draft horses and ponies are shown on Wednesday. The line classes are judged first followed by the hitch classes. The emerging skills of junior horsemen are recognized in a special class exclusive to young people who have not yet reached their 18th birthday.





Outside, under the park's picnic shelter you will find as many as two hundred rabbits and cavies gathered to compete in various categories. Burgeoning numbers of poultry entries has recently necessitated this competition's move outdoors and the limiting of entries. Under the tents twenty-six different classes for hens and cocks fill up quickly.

Everyone attending the fair is included in the action. Attendees are engaged in novel contests that celebrate the multiplicity of people and span of generations attending the fair. Organizers conduct a search to identify the largest family, the longest married couple, the youngest baby, the oldest person, and the person having traveled the furthest at the fair. Visitors to the fair will be immersed in the traditions of agriculture and rural life enjoying demonstrations and exhibits that include flowers, vegetables, home baking, homecrafts, woodworking, quilt making, antique tractors and vintage cars. Vendors ply their wares and food concessions abound. The demolition derby is a popular spectator event. A midway provides exciting rides and games of chance.

All of this comes about through the efforts of a small but committed group of Sunderland Agricultural Society members who volunteer their time to organize the two day event. Many members have been active for more than twenty-five years following in the footsteps of previous generations. Committee chairs take responsibility for planning their classes, enlisting needed help and engaging judges. Miraculously, the event comes to together and becomes bigger and better each year, thanks to the ongoing support and sponsorship of individuals, families and businesses in the surrounding area. To get the full picture of the Sunderland fair visit their website, www.agfair.ca.

by Joyce Allin, Secretary, Sunderland Fall Fair

