

An Open Letter about... "Where Does the Fair Money Go?"

Dear Putnam County Citizens,

Recently one of our County Commissioners at a County Commission Meeting ask, "Where does the fair money go?" That question promoted me to write this letter to explain what happens with the money generated by the Putnam County Agricultural & Industrial Fair.

This year The Putnam County Fair Board has budgeted about \$310,000 of revenue and expenses of \$299,000. That is the budget, but there are lots of circumstances that will affect the outcome, such as, attendance figures, exhibitor space rented, concessions booth rentals, entry fees for horse shows and fairst of the fair. These revenue figures are all budgeted at last year's revenue figures – making them very conservative because we feel we will have more people attend this year's fair. However, weather is a big factor in determining if we meet our budget. We have to be prepared for rain – remember last year, Thursday was a rained-out day entirely.

Sixty thousand dollars is being offered this year as premiums (cash to people who enter things in the fair), plus another \$5,000 in ribbons and trophies. We have committed just over \$140,000 to the various program events in the arena and on the stages. We will spend close to \$60,000 on contracted services -- accounting; security; parking services; cleaning services; ambulance; fire services; trash; workers who help us with maintenance services; rental of tables, chairs and tents; as well as another \$11,000 for utilities – lights and sewer. We have committed over \$20,000 for printing and marketing – I think that totals to about \$296,000.

This \$296,000 provides jobs for people in this county, buys county services, and channels premium money right back into the economy of Putnam County. Some of our concessions are run by local groups raising funds for the services they provide, citizens, and local businesses – more money going into the county economy. Seventy five exhibitors who rent space and market their products generate more tax revenue and sell more of their services to people who come to the fair – all contributing to more jobs and revenue to the county.

We try and maintain a balance in the checking account of \$70,000 to start the next year's fair. We will have spent close to \$60,000 by the time we cut the ribbon on this year's fair. With good weather we will put that back into the checking account with perhaps another \$10,000 - \$20,000 if we are lucky and if we have planned the great fair program we think we have.

No one on the fair board receives any compensation. We do have our rooms and a couple of meals covered when we attend the Tennessee Association of Fairs Annual Meeting in Nashville in January each year. We cover our own transportation and the remaining meal expenses.

That's where the fair's money goes. Keep in mind that close to 40,000 people will attend this year's fair. What other county event will reach that many people in ten days? They spend money at the fair, generating tax and revenue for the county. People come from surrounding counties bringing more revenue into the county. Restaurants, hotels/motels, gas stations, and dozens of other businesses benefit during fair time.

But the fair is so much more than money. It's about community. It's about neighbor meeting neighbor and sharing the bounty of this area with their entries in the garden, field crops and animal shows at the fair. It's making new friends, and spending some quality time with your family, having dinner at the fair, watching a horse show, mule pulling, truck pull or fireworks. It's about cotton candy, a ride on the merry go round or Ferris wheel. It's really about the memories we will make for a lifetime. That's what it's been for me too and that is why I am working harder at this non-paying job than I did when I was employed.

That's where the fair money goes folks. It's really spent on the community and the families who will buy a ticket and..."Come Make a Fair Memory."

Next time someone ask you where the fair money goes, please tell them - it goes right back into Putnam County and its economy.

***John Allen, President
Putnam County Fair Board
2290 W. Broad St.
Cookeville, TN 38501***