Good afternoon ... and thanks for joining us ... I'm Judy Simpson. This is prime time for Vermont’s Fairs and Field Days. Addison County is underway ... next week comes Orleans County ... and after that comes Caledonia County. The state’s biggest fair – the Champlain Valley Fair – opens August 27th in Essex Junction. Joining me this afternoon is the long-time general manager of the Champlain Valley Exposition ...

Dave Grimm. Welcome back to Across the Fence!

Dave.: Thank you very much it's a pleasure to be here.

Judy.: I can't believe it's that time already!

Dave.: Summer has gone by very quickly and fair time is upon us.

Judy.: Before we talk about what's new at this year's fair, tell us about one of the mainstays Agriculture.

Dave.: Agriculture is always a big deal for all of our fares in the state and the nation and of course that eagerly at the Champlain valley exposition we will have a large dairy cattle show. Rabbits will be popular our sheep show is always very interesting and poultry is always lot of fun because you can get up close with the pens and see these chickens right before your eyes.

Judy.: Nose to nose.

Dave.: Nose to nose.

Judy.: One of the most impressive things that I see every year is the young people working with the animals.

Dave.: They do. Four H is really big here there's 3000 four H'ers in the state of Vermont and so many of them come to the fair to exhibit their livestock or their art or their horses with the equine exhibits is very popular.

Judy.: You're going to have and options into the Vermont agriculture hall of fame?

Dave.: Yes this will be the ninth year were honoring the best of Vermont agriculturalist. It's a very perceived as award there before inductees this year. It will take place on Wednesday during the fair up in our Robert E Miller expo center room. The governor is expected to be there the lieutenant governor secretary of agriculture. It's the highest honor for the agricultural folks here in the state.
Judy.: We're going to talk about some of the new things at the fair. One of the biggest new things is the gateway.

Dave.: We were building that last year and we had it pretty well done by fair time but now it's open in its full glory. We call it the pearl street gateway its 500 feet with our width on pearl street with a new entrance where people will come in. The two beautiful walk away with sidewalks lighting and it's a much nicer entrance to the fair and very popular.

Judy.: There's also a new policy regarding smoking tell me about that?

Dave.: Our board and our staff have been talking about this for a couple of years. Actually the Addison county fair in the state tried this a couple of years ago and they've been successful. We thought it was a good idea us so we latched onto it as well. We will have a nonsmoking policy at the fair there will be five smoking can appease portents that won't have sides on them just the canopy with seating and a place where you can put your cigarette out. We're not going to have the smoking police but we're going to encourage people to not smoke at the fair. We have thousands of people 250,000 folks will attend. Many nights I can remember on a Friday and Saturday or Sunday were packed its wall to wall people and we think that's a trend to be taking in our business. We're in a public business in health there's a lot of kids and families and we think nonsmoking as the route to go. We've always had the policy in the Coca-Cola grandstand and it's always worked there were just extending it to the rest of the fair. If people feel they just have to lite up we will have a smoking tent for them to go to.

Judy.: Excellent. The fare wouldn't be complete without rides. What are some of the big rides coming?

Dave.: We have a big one. We have the tango in the big wheel but we also have a new ride called the stinger. It was just built in Italy and has been shipped over here by boat and will be arriving at the fair. We're going to be the first fair in the north east to get it. It's a little bit like the wild flaw that goes back and forth. There's a turret that also goes around in this for cars on there in each of the cars also go around so it turns about four different ways and it not only goes back and forth it also goes all the way over. So this may be one of the most thrilling rides we've ever had at the fair.

Judy.: One of the most thrilling rides I will never go on.

Dave.: If you'd like to go I could arrange that.

Judy.: No I'm good. The mid-way is one of the attractions at the fair but that's where the Champlain valley expo staff begins and in this video montage that takes us around the fairgrounds let's take a look.

[music]

Judy.: Making friends at the fair.

Dave.: Is very popular people love to come to the fair because it's maybe their only opportunity once a year to get close and personal with agriculture.

Judy.: And get their hands on.

Dave.: That's right it's a lot of fun for kids to come up and at the sheep or hold the bunny rabbit and those kinds of things. Each are great experiences.
Judy.: What you offering this year in terms of free entertainment?

Dave.: We have a tremendous lineup. One of the things we have there's a great show called the flying pages. Seven members of a family from Italy and they'll be doing three shows a day. We also have a great band coming in from Chicago called new odyssey. Use or three guys that played over 30 different instruments. They'll also due three shows a day near gate A on the Burlington free press stage. Then were also bringing back a free show at the fair. A lot of people said is there something free in the grandstand that I could go to? This year we're going to salute the Beatles without Beatles tribute band called the return. The return of the Beatles a 90 minute show all you have to do is walk into the grandstand and enjoy the show on Tuesday night at the fair in the Coca-Cola grandstand.

Judy.: Excellent. In addition to the three entertainment there's also some pretty big name performers that are going to be coming. Tell us a little bit about that?

Dave.: We have the biggest name lineup that we've ever had I think in the history of the fair and certainly all of New England it's going to include opening night at the fair on Saturday night lynyrd skynyrd and the doobie brothers well known classic rock bands. Then we go to the opposite end of the scale for the younger kids called big time rush which will be on Sunday night that will be followed a little bit later in the week on Thursday night with Bruno Mars one of the hot new contemporary stars. Friday night will be alternative rock three doors down and safety suit. It's going to be a great night with a couple of bands there in the Coca-Cola grandstand. Then the number one show at the fair they won five Grammys this year is lady antebellum.

Judy.: That's a big name.

Dave.: It's a big name one of the biggest we've ever had. Saturday night that show is expected to sell out and we don't have too many tickets remaining on that show. And Sunday night the night before Labor Day one of the hot country bands in America sugar land.

Judy.: Tell me a little bit about the process deciding who it is you're going to have come to the fair because it's a big deal to get these bands.

Dave.: We start working on that in November or early December when we go to our national convention where all the fairs and expositions get together. Our agents who we have on our behalf are talking to organizations and agencies like William Morris' CAA those kinds of companies. We start thinking and talking about what the entertainment is going to be and who's going to be touring. I also want to say a lot of times we may want to get a band or an act but sometimes they might not be touring at our time or not tour for the entire season. We also have a couple of other great fairs in the northeast that we partner with and that would be the New York State fair in Syracuse and also the great Allentown fair in Pennsylvania. A lot of times we will book the same entertainment in those acts will go from Essex junction to Allentown and then to Syracuse. So routing plays a very big role. In the last thing is you have to have a lot of guts in this business and say we're going to pay the big money for the stars because it's very substantial payouts to bring them in. We hope that everything comes together.

Judy.: Talking about big events let's talk about the giant pumpkin.

Dave.: The giant pumpkin has been one of the staples at the fair for many years and it's always very popular. The winner can be anywhere from 900 pounds two about 1100 pounds and that's really big. I'm always thankful we have a fair late in the summer in the growing season which gives the pumpkin extra time to grow. That's always great. One of our other competitive exhibits is art. We will have the largest art show that will take place in the state of Vermont during the fair just shy of 1000 pieces of art of every kind of art you can imagine in the blue ribbon pavilion building.
Judy.: And there are a lot of very talented people in this state.

Dave.: Yes there are. There will be a lot of blue ribbons given out both young and old.

Judy.: The fare wouldn't be complete without food. Is not only fair food of course but there's also demonstrations.

Dave.: Yes will have demonstrations in our kitchen in the Ware building every day. Price chopper will anchor that on the opening weekend in the last weekend. Then we just solidified a deal with Chef Kelly. Kelly Dietrich a well-known chef in this area is going to be manning the kitchen Monday through Friday. He'll do three shows a day about 1/2 hour show and she'll have samples for everybody when he gets done preparing the food. In the price chopper folks as well so don't forget to go the where building. It's also where conditions so it's a nice place to go in and relax at the fair and eat some more food.

Judy.: Sounds good to me. Food is really a big deal these days especially local food.

Dave.: It is and we're trying to encourage our exhibitors are food exhibitors which total about 80 all together at the fair to use as much a local food as possible and ask some of our vendors to bring in local food. The food is the number one reason that people go to fairs nationally. When we look at our surveys they come for food because it's perfectly legal to pig out at the fair.

Judy.: As a matter of fact it's the one time of the year when you can make an exception to that and say this is what I am going to eat.

Dave.: That's right if you and I were to go out and have lunch today and have a sausage sandwich and fried dough for dessert and lemonade people would say what's the matter with them but come to the fair you can do it three times a day for 10 days and nobody will say anything.

Judy.: The Champlain valley fair gets underway August 27 and runs through labor day September 5 for more information you can log onto CV expo.org or you can call the Expos' main office at 802 878 5545. Two you just give me in a minute left your insight to what has been the most popular thing at the fair?

Dave.: As I indicated food is always popular but I think socializing is a big thing. People want to go to the fair to see friends that maybe they haven't seen for an entire year. They want to walk around they want to relive their past they want to see what's new. I think the fair is a complete experience. Certainly there are high points of the fair that some people want to see one of them is Steve Bainer the hypnotist. We've had Steve for 16 years the longest running attraction at the fair and there are people who come to the fair just to see Steve Bainer. There are people who come just to see animals. But I think the overall people come for a complete experience it's an opportunity to have a great time before Labor Day and the kids are starting to get ready to go back to school and they want to have a blast.

Judy.: All right Dave thanks so much. To close of today's program we are going to have some sights and sounds at the fair mid-way as photographed and edited by our own Keith Silva enjoy the show and thanks for joining us.

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