

County fair attracted record crowd



Dean Guernsey/The Bulletin

Jeff Rogers and Dianne Phillips hang colossal stuffed animals in a carnival game booth while setting up for the Deschutes County Fair & Rodeo.

BY LEO BAUDHUIN

Redmond Spokesman

The 2022 Deschutes County Fair broke an attendance record set just last year

as it welcomed 165,000 visitors through the five-day event earlier this month, and set a single-day record with almost 50,000 fairgoers on

Saturday Aug. 6 alone.

“We were just honored to be able to celebrate with so many members of our community, and that the different

activities and events we put together were well-received,” said Deschutes County Fair & Expo manager Geoff Hinds.

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Nick Rosenberger/Redmond Spokesman

David Maldonado cooks caramel corn at the Deschutes County Fair in Redmond on August 3.

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From Hinds' perspective, this year's biggest success was the rodeo. Organizers moved this year's rodeo indoors and focused on high-energy, well-produced events, he said.

On multiple nights, it was standing room only inside the 4,000-seat First Interstate Bank Center.

This year's fair also built off 2021 adjustments, like moving concerts outdoors and making them free with fair entry. While Hinds said the move was initially motivated by COVID-19 safety, fair organizers decided to continue the new tradition this time around.

Part of that was motivated by the awareness that the pandemic isn't fully over and risks increase when tens of thousands of people gather indoors, Hinds said.

But he said it also plays

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— **Geoff Hinds, Deschutes County Fair & Expo manager, who also shared that this year's biggest success was the rodeo; organizers moved this year's rodeo indoors and focused on high-energy, well-produced events**

into Central Oregon's summer outdoor concert culture, and that they expect the tradition to continue in upcoming years.

Even areas where the fair has struggled have seen some level of improvement. Hinds said last year was a major milestone in traffic management.

Through a multi-jurisdictional management effort, organizers were able to get exit times down from two hours at peak capacity to about 45 minutes.

Although he doesn't yet

have specifics for this year, Hinds said he's heard anecdotally that this year's traffic has met or exceeded that 45-minute benchmark.

Still, Hinds said, most of this fair's takeaways will be up to the community — both of organizers and their networks — that helped it come together.

"We have to take some time to recap this one and recognize our successes and where we can improve," he said.

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