

Country Christmas at the AFMA!!!
2026 AFMA Convention Dates: December 11-13, 2025

Plans are underway for a great convention. We want to share some of the details with you as President or Fair Manager of your local fair. Please share with your local fair board. The newsletter will also be posted on our website: www.arkansasfairmanagers.com

We hope your fair is making plans to attend. We will be at the Hot Springs Convention Center. The Hotel Hot Springs and Embassy Suites will be blocking rooms for the AFMA delegates. We do suggest that you get your rooms early prior to the cutoff date of November 10, 2025 for the Embassy Suites and November 17, 2025, for the Hotel Hot Springs.

Arkansas Fair Managers Association Announces Innovative New Convention Format

The Arkansas Fair Managers Association (AFMA) is excited to announce a new and improved format for its upcoming annual convention, designed to serve as a comprehensive hub for fair managers, staff, and volunteers across the state. This year's convention will focus on providing essential certifications, licenses, and workshops to help fairs become more successful, safe, and efficient.

Recognizing the need to streamline professional development for fair personnel, AFMA is partnering with various state and national organizations to offer a one-stop shop for critical training. This new format aims to make it easier for fair professionals to obtain the necessary credentials to run a modern fair.

The new offers we are working to lock in at the convention will include, but not limited to:

- **NPIP Private Tester School:** This certification is crucial for individuals who need to perform blood tests on poultry for Pullorum-Typhoid disease, which is often a requirement for birds exhibited at fairs and shows.
- **ServSafe Certification:** A must-have for anyone handling food, the ServSafe certification ensures that fair vendors and staff are trained in proper food safety protocols, protecting both participants and the public.
- **Beef and Pork Quality Assurance (BQA/PQA):** These programs educate producers and show exhibitors on best practices for animal care, welfare, and handling, ensuring a high-quality and safe food supply.

* **EIA Coggins Verifier:** Fair managers and staff will be able to get certified as Coggins verifiers, enabling them to check for required Equine Infectious Anemia (EIA) test results for all equine entering an event.

In addition to these important certifications, the AFMA convention will also host a session featuring fairs.com and the Fairs Across America Tour. This session will provide valuable information from barn to midway, main gate to grandstand, they capture the critical role Fairs play in bringing your communities together.

We are committed to providing the resources our members need to succeed. This new convention format is a direct response to the needs of our fairs. We want to be the central location where you all can get the necessary tools and learn new skills to help your fairs grow and thrive.

The AFMA convention is striving to be an invaluable event for fair organizers seeking to elevate their operations and ensure compliance with modern standards.

For more information on the upcoming convention, including dates, location, and registration details, please visit the Arkansas Fair Managers Association website.

Scharidi Barber
AFMA Board Member

As fair season begins, each fair needs to take into consideration that fair board member who deserves to be recognized and worthy of getting an award. You can check our website for qualifications for the Hall of Fame, Charles Smith Memorial Award, Mary Louise Fiser Family Award, Lloyd Dunaway Award and the Work Horse Award. We ask that nominations be received by mail by October 15, 2025.

We will have four positions to fill on the AFMA Board at our 2026 AFMA Convention. AFMA Board members Karen Baker and Scharidi Barber have fulfilled their terms. Each are qualified for a second five-year term. We will have two positions which will fulfill current vacated positions with one term of one year, the second for three years. If you are interested in becoming an AFMA Board Director, submit your resume prior to the October 15, 2025 deadline. You must be a current voting board member in good standing with your fair. You will also need a letter of recommendation from your current fair board.

The Display of Fairs is a great way to share ideas. We hope each fair will take time to make photos during their 2025 fair season, putting a display together using our theme **Country Christmas at the AFMA**. Each fair participating will be in a drawing for \$50 for three (3) lucky

fairs. Also, remember a “traveling” plaque will be given to the fair voted favorite display. The plaque will be brought back the following year.

The **Early Bird Reception** will set the stage for our convention on Thursday night at 6:00 p.m. We will be serving finger foods. We hope you will make plans to participate in the **Ugly Sweater contest**. **Bingo** will be played at \$5.00 per card, along with other games that we know everyone will enjoy!

We plan to have some type of incentive to encourage more of you to attend and stay throughout the Early Bird Reception. More information will be given soon. Arkansas entertainers will be used throughout the convention. For those dance lovers, we do plan to have a DJ for the dance.

AFMA Junior Ambassador Program – 2025

We are excited to be back for another year of the **AFMA Junior Ambassador Program!** This program is a great opportunity for youth to represent their local fairs, connect with others from across the state, and gain valuable leadership experience.

Important Dates:

Applications are due **October 1, 2025**.

We will be sending the application forms to all fair boards statewide via email in the coming days.

Who Should Apply:

If your fair board has youth volunteers or a junior fair board, we encourage you to submit applications! Participation in this program is an excellent way to engage your youth, promote the fair industry, and recognize the hard work of your young volunteers.

Community Service Hours:

Don't forget—participation in the AFMA Junior Ambassador Program counts toward **community service hours**, which can benefit students for school requirements, scholarships, and resumes.

We can't wait to see the outstanding young leaders that will represent their local fairs and the AFMA in 2025!

Hayley Skelton
AFMA Board Member

We are asking each fair to bring a Country Christmas ornament. A Christmas tree will be fully decorated with the ornaments, then auctioned off during the convention.

Our registration will once again be online. The registration fee will be the same as last year, \$45 per person, \$10 for 18 and under. We want to encourage the counties to stay for our awards banquet. The caterer will be LEVY, who will be replacing Turf Catering Services in November. The banquet tickets will remain at \$45 per person. The entertainment committee has great entertainment planned for the banquet. Come be a part. It will start at 6:00 p.m., and finish by 8:00 p.m.

For those who did not see the scholarship recipients on the website, we are proud to announce the 2025/2026 AFMA and Associate Scholarship recipients:

Hannah Baker	\$1,200	Baxter County Steve Skelton Endowed Scholarship
Brayden Mooney	\$1,000	Van Buren County Lloyd Dunaway Endowed Scholarship
Kaitlyn Spencer	\$1,000	Lonoke County AFMA Endowed Scholarship
Elizabeth Johnson	\$1,000	Crawford County AFMA Endowed Scholarship
Kamilla Quattlebaum	\$800	White County AFMA Scholarship
Tate Kelley	\$800	Searcy County AFMA Scholarship
Sawyer Beggs	\$800	Montgomery County AFMA Scholarship
Bailey Skelton	\$800	Carroll County AFMA Scholarship
Piper Frisby	\$1,000	Wells Fun Company AFMA Associate Scholarship

The youth of our fairs will one day be the leaders of our organization. It is our goal to assist in providing scholarships for those interested in continuing their education. We could not do this without our faithful supporters. **THANK YOU!!** Each county has an opportunity to send in one scholarship application per county. Get those applications filled out and be ready to apply for next year's scholarships

This year we will once again have a quilt to auction off for the scholarship program. Ms. Suzi Hall has volunteered to “commission” a quilt, making a quilt square for each county, district and state fair. It should be one of a kind. We do appreciate her giving of her time and talent.

Ms. Sue Miller has also volunteered to make another T-shirt quilt. We do ask that each county, district and state fair provide us with a T-shirt. We would like to have the T-shirts by September 1, 2025. They can be sent to Carolyn Wynn, 10757 St Hwy 54E, Star City AR 71667.

We will display the quilts at the convention in the AFMA Booth prior to auctioning off.

We love the participation by the county, district, and state fairs in decorating the tables. It truly adds to the décor. We can’t wait to see your Country Christmas ideas! Remember, we pick a favorite to be recognized. Each person will be allowed one vote.

The fair president or fair manager of each fair should have received an email request to update their fair contact information (if anything has changed). Please make sure your fair address, contact person, telephone number, and e-mail are correct in the convention directory. If you already know your fair dates for 2026, please forward also. Any information that needs to be updated, can be emailed to arkansasfairmanagers@yahoo.com

Fair season is here!! We hope all goes well with your fair activities. Remember, your AFMA Board is here to assist in any way possible: give us a call if needed. Watch the website, www.arkansasfairmanagers.com as well as our Facebook page, (Arkansas Fair Managers Association). We will list convention activities as they progress.