

# **ELBERT COUNTY FAIR BOARD ANNUAL REPORT 2024**



The Fair Board serves under the BOCC as the administrative team for the organization, planning, management and operation of the Elbert County Fair. We also coordinate and work side by side with Elbert County through their facilities manager and facilities team and the Elbert County Extension Office to efficiently plan and run a county fair that the community will enjoy. Working together with our 4-H and FFA community in a traditional county fair setting, we showcase our youth and offer entertainment at the Elbert County Fair that is held annually the first week of August of every summer. The objective of the Elbert County Fair is to focus on our rich and rural heritage, highlight livestock production, consumer science, and business enterprise in Elbert County. We partner closely with the county Extension office and focus on putting on an event that serves the county residents to bring fun and entertainment to our area. Our goal is always to have an exciting venue highlighting our western culture with a low cost or no cost approach. At the same time, the fair encourages the youth of Elbert County to develop leadership qualities and resourcefulness by providing them with an appropriate place to exhibit their accomplishments in agriculture, STEM, and all projects offered through CSU Extension.

In 2024, the Elbert County Fair celebrated its 90th annual fair in Kiowa. Although 2024 looked a lot differently than the fair did in its earliest of days, we take our history very passionately and worked this year to incorporate that theme into the fair and the joined the county as a whole as we came alongside their 150th Sesquicentennial celebrations. Early origins of the Elbert County Fair can be traced back to October 2, 1891, when Elizabeth hosted a one-day event billed as Vegetable Day. Despite a foot of snow falling the night before, the event was deemed a success and showcased a large exhibit of locally grown vegetables, a dairying section and a fine display of livestock. The following year the event was extended to two days, this time being held in late September and renamed the Elbert County Fair. Over the next twelve years the fair was sporadically held, but it wasn't until 1904 that it became an annual event in the town of Elbert. During the 1900s and into the late 1910s, the fair was held at Elbert with most of the activities taking place east of town along the flats adjacent to Kiowa Creek. Discounted train fares on the Colorado & Southern Railroad brought folks from Denver and Colorado Springs out to Elbert County for the day, where they could picnic, view locally grown agricultural exhibits, watch horse racing or catch a baseball game played against rival towns, and more. In the 1920s the county fair was moved to Matheson for a time, where the fairgrounds included a fine racetrack and grandstands. Then in 1934 the Elbert County Fair was reorganized with an emphasis on 4-H and moved to Kiowa, where it has been held ever since.  
*(History courtesy of the Elbert County Historical Society & Museum.)*

As the fair board works to preserve our rural heritage and highlight the rich history of our county, we also recognize changing demographics, and population increase. As the only annual county-wide event the board spends the entire year planning and preparing for fair and carefully considering what benefits and attractions all community members of any age can enjoy. We remain committed to free parking, free attendance and 95% of all events have no cost. We acknowledge wonderful business partners who help make this happen, we couldn't put on a fair without generous sponsors and the support of the county.



This year's fair brought record attendance; exhibitors, vendors and attendees proclaimed it a terrific event. We opened the 8 free days of the 2024 Elbert County Fair with the Mountain States Highland Cattle Show, a team roping, the Fashion Review and the very first Elbert County Centennial Farms and Ranches Banquet (co-hosting that event with the Elbert County Historical Society, and in partnership with Elbert County 150th Anniversary Committee). We were honored to come alongside the county for this special year. Opening weekend is low key but fun and gets the fair going with the start of our 4-H shows like dog and horse. Opening Sunday, we feature all of the breeding projects with excellent competition in all major species. Monday and Tuesday bring the animal projects onto the grounds and by Tuesday evening we host one to three shows per day throughout the week. Open class exhibits are a fun competition for adults in the county with classes in quilting, canning, photography and so much more. On Thursday we partner with the Sheriff's Department to host a special luncheon and educational series for local seniors. Champions in 4-H were crowned by Friday and the top showmanship champions shined in the annual Round Robin competition.



The 4-H/FFA program continues to be strong in Elbert County with growing numbers in all livestock projects and shooting sports. We have so many talented kids in all areas of these programs. Our livestock shows are one of the most competitive in the state and general projects and shooting sports teams and individuals succeed at both the state and national levels. The fair board is honored and wishes to acknowledge a terrific leadership and relationship with the county extension team. From volunteers to staff, extension is the backbone of the wonderful events we co-host with them at the fair and all youth involved in this programming are impacted for life with the skills they learn and will apply as adults.



The focus of the fair shifts to community events later in the week and on Friday evening we gear up for the free Friday night event; we were excited to bring the gentle giants into the main arena for the annual horse pull. Teams from all over the country put on quite a show and this continues to be a favorite event amongst fair attendees. The first Saturday of August is always a big day at the county fair and 2024 didn't disappoint. We enjoyed record crowds and another record-breaking Junior Market Sale. There were a lot of activities for visitors at the county fair; whether they were attending the road grader rodeo, a visit to the animals' barns, ride the rides, browse the open class and 4H exhibits, brush a goat in the petting zoo or even get a health check at the county health fair. The evening

featured mini bull riders, the well-attended Bulls, Broncs and Buckaroos rodeo with 50 mutton busters and lots of shopping and food options from terrific vendors. Following the rodeo the lights went out and the main stage lit up featuring international recording superstars, The Bellamy Brothers. The concert was enjoyed by over 2000 people, and we were blessed with a chamber of commerce kind of night with gorgeous weather and classic country music. Sunday, we concluded with our parade, family-fun events like mutton busting, ice cream eating contests and a free ranch rodeo. The campground and the fair grounds empty and we start planning for next year.

Unless you were a first-time visitor to the fairgrounds this year, you noticed so many improvements to facilities and grounds in 2024. In loving memory of Gary Woirhaye, (Elbert County Facilities Manager) who passed in October, we wish to acknowledge fantastic improvements such as updated lighting, a facelift to many barns, new expanded seating with more bleachers and a new parking lot just to name a few. As the fair continues to grow, the facilities need continued updates and expansions to accommodate attendees' and exhibitors. Gary's vision of updates or replacement to older structures will continue as construction is soon to begin on a new larger open pavilion. The facilities crew is an important partner of the fair board, and we thank them and Gary Woirhaye for their efforts. The months of work to prepare for the county fair and the 8 days of events is hard work and it takes a joint effort from everyone involved to make it work.

Thank you, Elbert County Citizens and the Elbert County Board of County Commissioners, for their continued support of this wonderful fair. The Elbert County Fair Board is made up of hard-working volunteers, who together with dozens of other departments, committees and volunteers make the first week of August the best week of the year.

### **Fair Board Members (2024-2025)**

**Carnahan, Christopher**

**Duke, Ben (Past-President)**

**Hinton, Ralph**

**Kelty, Troy**

**Love, Klynn (Secretary)**

**Miller, Garrett**

**Rook, Dave**

**Schneider, Tammi (President)**

**Smith, Trevor**

**Strachan, Kristi (Treasurer)**

**Summers, Matt**

**Thieman, Aaron**

**Trehal, Sheri**

**White, Will (Vice President)**

**Whitman, Vicky**

**Benson, Kali (ex-officio)**



Financial report for 2024:

2024 Elbert County Fair Expenses **\$143,291.13**

2024 Elbert County Fair Revenue **\$161,103.50**

Vendor/General income \$33,548.50

Sponsorships \$89,900.00

Other \$7,655.00

County Contribution \$30,000.00

This closes the books on 2024 as all invoices have been paid and all sponsorships collected. Thank you to the Finance Department staff of Elbert County and the current serving Treasurer of the Fair Board, Kristi Strachan for the hard work that goes into reconciling accounts for the annual fair.

Respectfully Submitted, Tammi Schneider (Elbert County Fair Board President)

