

Daily Union Article

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Title: Bring Us Your Best!

The countdown is on for the 2016 Geary County Free Fair. Kids have been working hard to complete 4-H projects and get their animals ready for show. No doubt it will be an exciting and exhausting time for our 4-H families. But the Geary County Free Fair isn't just for our 4-H kids. There is also the Open Class part of the Fair where the general public can participate by entering their personal projects.

There are 8 Departments (project areas) that non-4-H youth and adults can participate in. This year there are two special contests that are open to the public, as well. Read on for a brief description of each of these:

The **Food Preparation** department is geared toward those who are interested in displaying their culinary talents in the areas of cookies, yeast breads, quick breads, pies, cakes, candy, or snacks. Our younger folks may bring something as simple as their favorite snack mix (and the recipe they use to make it) or a no-bake cookie that they learned from their parent or other adult role model. For those with experience in the kitchen, you may want to tackle more challenging projects such as croissants or specialty cakes. Whether you're new to baking or a seasoned veteran of the kitchen, there's something for you in the Food Preparation department!

Food Preservation has been increasing in popularity. As people try to explore ways to make their lifestyles focus on sustainability, preserving the food they grow or purchase is one way they can do that. Looking out at my own garden, I see the many green tomatoes that will ripen before I know it and canning them for use this winter will be an ongoing late summer project. Canning vegetables is not the only area of food preservation; jellies, jams, canned meat, and dried foods add wide variety to this department in the Open Class Free Fair.

Switching gears from food to fiber, the **Textiles** department is open to those who love sewing, quilting, tatting, crocheting, knitting, felting, weaving or spinning. You may think these skills are old fashioned and they can be considered as such, but they are also contemporary and modern in nature. Creating your own textile project is both fun and rewarding. The finished product has your personal handprint on it while also making something that is useful. The Textiles department also expands into homemade pillows, rugs, wall hangings, and so much more. Even if you don't have the

skill set to create these artistic and expressive projects, you'll enjoy seeing them on display at the Geary County Free Fair.

If these three departments don't spark an interest, consider entering your most recent **Arts and Crafts** projects. Perhaps you have your own creative ideas that you have put into practice or found an idea on the web that you wanted to try, arts and crafts has a category for everything. For example, using repurposed wood or furniture has become more popular of late. Changing an end-table into a lamp stand or using a window frame to hang pictures in is just a couple of the many ideas you may try. Painting, ceramics, drawings, woodworking and metal works are just a few more of the many classes in arts and crafts.

If you enjoy **Photography**, the Geary County Free Fair is for you! Following the guidelines outlined in the Open Class Fair Book available at area businesses and at the Geary County Extension office, you can mount your favorite shots and enter them for judging. Black and white or color, there are three perspectives with a variety of classes that you can enter in: 1) Photo-Journalism Print – a print that tells a story that could be used in a newspaper or magazine article. 2) World in Motion Pictorial Print – a print that shows action or movement. 3) Pictorial Print – a print that is both artistically composed and of high technical quality. Remember that youth ages 4 – 16 can also enter their projects in any open class department in the youth section.

For our garden and manicured lawn enthusiasts, options for entering a sample of your hobby abound! In **Horticulture**, you can enter a small or large vegetable specimen, fruit from your homegrown vines or trees, or a combination of everything you grow for consumption. If you enjoy planting and tending to a flower bed or herb container garden, there's a place for those in **Floriculture**. House plants, patio plants, and dried arrangements also have an exhibition class in which you can enter your projects.

For our area producers, the **Agriculture** department is especially designed for you. For example, bring in your carefully selected 10 ears of yellow corn or popcorn to be judged. A bundle of 10 soybean plants or 3 heads of sunflowers from your field are two other great options. Finally, don't overlook the alfalfa, prairie hay or brome you have put up for feed. Show off the great bounty of our county's farms at this year's Geary County Open Class Free Fair.

Two special contests remain: 1) **Special Baking Contest** featuring homemade apple pie, and 2) **Barn Quilt Contest** where exhibitors create a 2' x 2' barn quilt that would commonly be displayed outside their home or hay barn.

There is indeed something for everyone at the Geary County Free Fair. If you want more information on how to enter your projects or products and the guidelines for participation, pick up an Open Class fair book at the Geary County Extension office or call us at 238-4161. As you consider what you want to enter, check out the specific requirements for each department that are explained in the fair book. Until next time, keep living resourcefully!