

Delta Sources and Resources

The Delta Fair & Music Festival **The Agricenter International** **Memphis, Tennessee** by Karley Horton

In 2007 Mark Lovell, founder and CEO of the Delta Fair & Music Festival, wanted to create a clean, safe and family friendly environment for fairgoers and bring back the old time feeling of the fair. Mark books all of the attractions, rides, entertainment and staff himself and remains fully integrated in the day to day operations. The first Delta Fair & Music Festival drew seventy-five thousand people and has grown steadily each year to two hundred fifty thousand people. This year, 2016, will mark the tenth anniversary of the Delta Fair & Music Festival and their goal is to make it the best year yet. Their mission since 2007 has been to pro-

duce an annual Fair & Music Festival that is exciting, interactive, and educational. They strive to bring our communities together with safe, wholesome family entertainment, while celebrating and promoting the rich art, music, and history of the Delta. The Delta Fair & Music Festival is an annual ten-day event that opens Labor Day weekend every year and is located in Memphis, Tennessee at the Agricenter International. This year's dates of the festival are September 2-11.

The Delta Fair & Music Festival seeks to produce a yearly event that showcases all that the Delta has to offer from Agriculture, Livestock, Art, Culture, Education, Innovation, and Talent. For example, they have created multiple theme days, including Senior American Day, Latino Day, Ladies Night, Salute our Military Day, and much more where they offer discounts in hopes to bring the community together.



Photograph Courtesy of GC Photo Productions
by Gary & Carol Cox

They have several favorite local contests, along with national contests, that are always fun to enter, and everyone has the chance to win great awards. Visitors will find a wide variety of contests from canning to photography, sewing to woodworking, knitting to culinary, gardening to stained glass, recycled crafts to crocheting, student art to youth crafts—the Delta Fair has something for everyone to enter. The Delta Fair’s livestock competitions offer 4-H and FFA students the opportunities to grow in their agricultural pursuits as well as offering adult participation. The children’s barnyard lets them experience real life agriculture in a traditional fair environment where they can watch chicks hatch and help milk the goats and cows. The Delta Fair & Music Festival allows hands on activities for kids of all ages, along with being educational.

The Delta Fair gives ages eight to twenty-eight the opportunity to showcase their talent at the Star of the Fair contest. Modeled after the *American Idol* talent contest, Star of the Fair seeks to showcase the top vocalists in the Mid-South. Another contest they have put together is The Miss Delta Fair pageant, which promotes and cultivates the empowerment of young women, and encourages girls from infant to twenty-two years of age to compete for the Delta Fair Pageant title in their age division. They provide an outlet for a wide range of young women to foster poise, self-confidence, communication skills, and build self-esteem. Contestants learn self-discipline, stage presence, and the ability to think on their feet. Their goal is to provide a platform where young women can take a sense of pride and accomplishment from this pageant experience, even if they do not take home the crown.

Another very well-known event that the Delta Fair & Music Festival has created is the “I Am Beautiful” pageant, which is for boys and girls with intellectual and developmental disabilities who have had a harder time in life. The pageant gives them an opportunity to shine and show the world just how beautiful they are. This

pageant is a fundraiser for the Best Buddies Tennessee Memphis chapter. Best Buddies offers joy and fulfillment through one-to-one friendships with their non-disabled peers. The effects of these friendships are innumerable and the impact is undeniable. Best Buddies is shaping our community, changing attitudes, and creating a powerful movement towards the acceptance and inclusion of those with differences.

Every year the Delta Fair & Music Festival strives to balance the music lineup on their multiple stages to showcase national acts as well as some of our very own artists who have their roots growing deep into the Delta soil. Some artists who have performed over the years include Spin Doctors, Gym Class Heroes, Justin Moore, Sister Hazel, Uncle Kracker, Chris Cagle, and the list goes on. Not only can you enjoy the breathtaking rides, live music and attractions for all ages, but the Delta Fair & Music Festival is also a great place to volunteer with the Fair Family and get involved with competitions.

We consider everyone in the Delta as part of the Fair Family. The Delta Fair & Music Festival is “Everyone’s Fair”. All the information about the event, including Schedules, Sign-up Forms, Attractions and Concert information, can be found at www.deltafest.com. ▲▼▲



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