



Dan Coyro/Sentinel

Mocha the smiling goat from Salinas is a big hit this year with county fair-goers.

Hundreds visit county showcase on opening day

Fairs, 2008

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By **DONNA JONES**
SENTINEL STAFF WRITER

WATSONVILLE — The skies were gray, the mood anything but as the Santa Cruz County Fair opened Tuesday.

Hundreds of people strolled the grounds, squealed at the 12 piglets and their mom in the livestock barn, splurged on cinnamon buns and oohed and aahed over exhibits ranging from pumpkins to photography.

"I love it, especially the gardening section," said Joe Pendry of Watsonville. "A lot of thought goes into those displays. I look forward to it every year."

Sunnyvale resident Steve Hansen, a veteran of the fair circuit, has been selling inflatable toys across the state all summer. He didn't have too many takers early Tuesday, but he wasn't worried. He was anticipating the arrival of school children and families later in the

If You Go

WHAT: Santa Cruz County Fair.

WHEN: Noon to 11 p.m. Wednesday-Friday, 10 a.m. to 11 p.m. Saturday, 10 a.m. to 10 p.m. Sunday.

WHERE: 2601 E. Lake Ave., Watsonville.

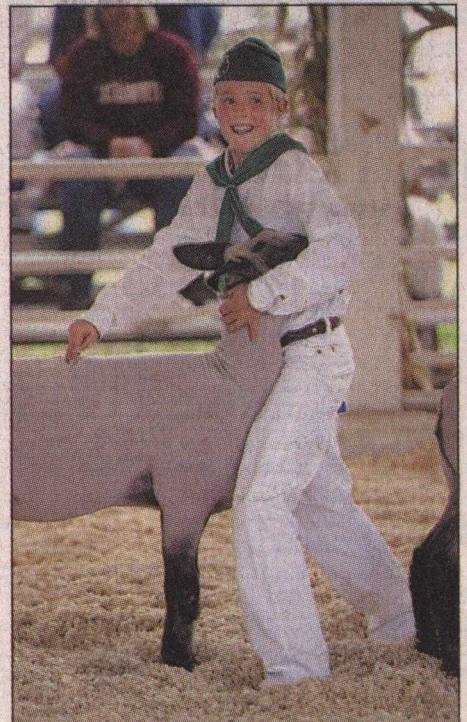
ADMISSION: \$10 adults, \$6 seniors and children, 5-11.

DETAILS: 724-5671
or www.santacruzcountyfair.com.

week, and he said the sluggish economy hasn't hurt fairs.

"People are not going to Disneyland," he said. "They're staying local, going to local fairs, street fairs and festivals without having to drive 500 miles."

Stacey and Robert Amirsehhi of Watsonville



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Megan Farley of Corralitos is all smiles with her third-place finish.

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took the week off from their jobs at UPS to do the fair full-time with daughters Katie, 13, and Haley, 10.

Katie, a first-year member of the Junior Livestock Committee, ate half a corn dog and then rested her head on a picnic table about 2 p.m. After putting in hours helping get the livestock pens ready during the past couple of weekends and then assisting with veterinary checks and stall assignments Monday, she was bushed, but happy "just to be here."

"You see everybody you only see once a year," Robert said. "That's why we like it."

For others, the goats, the pigs, the cows and the sheep were the draw.

The lambs in the ring during a junior showmanship competition were acting like anything but sheep. They baa-ed and bucked in protest at being held and led around the ring, but Aptos Junior High School student Rachel Hodder, 12, of Corralitos, kept her lamb in line and took the blue ribbon.

"It's the best I've ever done," said Rachel, grinning with delight.

Across the way, Samantha Tomaino, 21 months, was offering to share her smoothie with



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The top pumpkin at the county fair this year weighs in at 814 pounds.

a couple of baby goats. She was accompanied by mother Shannon and sister Mia, 4.

"It's good for them to see," Tomaino said, explaining why she brought her daughters. "They get some exercise, experience some new things. It's better than TV. And you gotta love the food."

Supervisor Tony Campos was making his way to the Watsonville Rotary stand for a "the best hamburgers." But he said he wouldn't stop there. He and wife Becky plan to attend every day, so he'd get a chance to try out some of the other booths as well, he said.

"I like the animals. I like the people," Campos said. "You get people from all over the county. You get them to come to Watsonville and see what it's all about."

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