



DAN COYRO/SENTINEL

Pacific Coast Charter student Jeanette Moules and her father Joseph Moules of Watsonville have their hands full with squealing piglets they're showing at the Santa Cruz County Fair.

# Finishing touches

Volunteers scurry to get everything in order for fair's opening today

Fairs

By DONNA JONES

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WATSONVILLE — For months, Santa Cruz County Fairgrounds has been shrouded in the gloom of dismal finances.

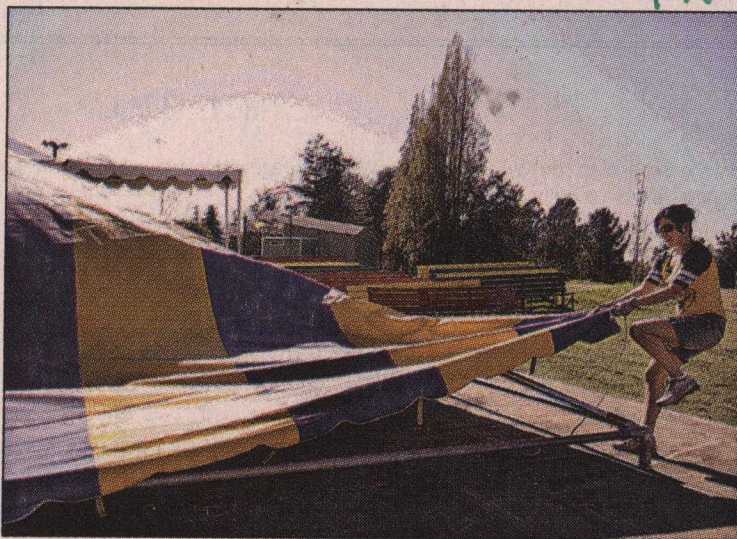
The atmosphere brightened Monday as, with fewer than 24 hours to go before the opening of the annual County Fair, volunteers scrambled to make sure everything was in place and perfect.

Ribbons were placed on the best of countless displays of flowers, produce, art and crafts by young and old. Exhibitors unloaded livestock, including Missy and her seven little piglets, born just a week ago. Vendors polished their booths.

"We've been working real hard," said Myrna England, co-chair of the Floriculture Department. "We struggled this summer, but things are working out really well. We've had a lot of support from the community."

In July, the fair's board of directors learned revenue was down \$200,000 or about 17 percent from projections and leaders began thinking about how to restructure.

Monday, standing in front of



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Carolina Raintree of Sacramento stretches out the canopy for her and her husband's Circus Imaginations at the Santa Cruz County Fair, where they have been performing in their kids' participation circus for five years.

## IF YOU GO

SANTA CRUZ COUNTY FAIR

**WHAT:** Exhibits, concerts, demonstrations, livestock, vendors

**WHEN:** Noon to 10 p.m. Tuesday; noon to 11 p.m. Wednesday-Friday; 10 a.m. to 11 p.m. Saturday; 10 a.m. to 10 p.m. Sunday

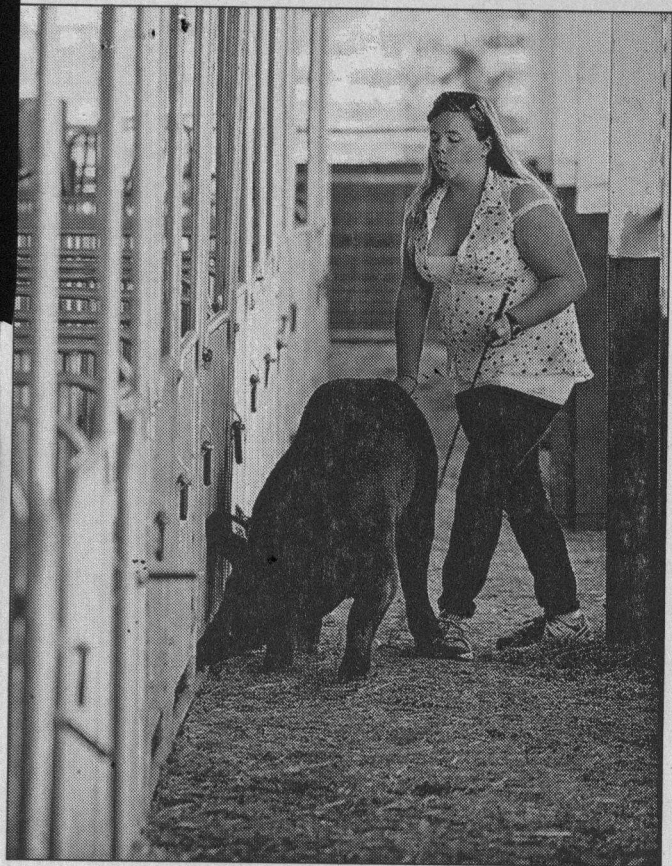
**WHERE:** Santa Cruz County Fairgrounds, 2601 E. Lake Ave., Watsonville

**TICKETS:** \$10 ages 13-61; \$6 seniors (\$4 Tuesday only), \$5, ages 6-12; free, 5 and younger. Kids are free Wednesday. Parking, \$5.

**DETAILS:** [www.santacruzcountyfair.com](http://www.santacruzcountyfair.com)

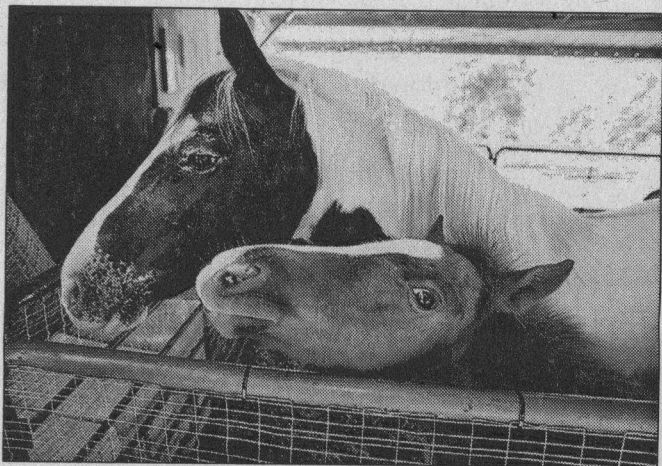
SEE FAIR ON A8





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**Kiely-Rose Phillips of San Jose prods along her pig Bubbles at the Santa Cruz County Fair where she's been showing pigs for five years.**



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**A mare and her colt watch the busy comings and goings from their stall as Santa Cruz County Fair participants prepare for today's opening.**

## FAIR

Continued from A1

the newly completed event venue, Heritage Hall, spokesman Steve Stagnaro said the fair has been able to keep going and pinch pennies at the same time thanks to the volunteers who have been doing the lion's share of work. The fledgling Friends of the Fair also has raised \$16,000 in just weeks, alleviating some of the concern.

Fair leaders haven't figured it all out, but things are looking up, he said.

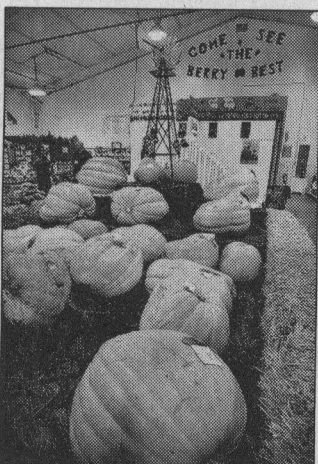
"We're in much better shape," Stagnaro said. "We're feeling, yes, we can spend the money we need to put on a good fair."

The fair appeared on track during a walk around the grounds.

In the Harvest Building, volunteer Gina Locatelli bustled around displays of giant pumpkins, plump tomatoes and rosy apples. Crates of strawberries are on the way, she said. Entries are up 20 percent.

Just past the horse show ring, behind a white picket fence, Judy Sauve and Pat Williams from the Monterey Bay Rose Society pressure-washed benches and deadheaded flowers in the rose garden.

Dave Kegebein, who heads up the fair's volunteer management team, rode up and



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**The biggest pumpkins in the county are on display at the Santa Cruz County Fair.**

down the midway Monday in a Kubota RTV — a sort of souped-up golf cart. He never got too far before being hailed to answer a question or sort out a last-minute problem.

Kegebein, who's donated his time since January to head up a volunteer management team, is on a mission to put on a great fair not just this year, but into the future. He said he practically grew up at the fairgrounds after his dad John Kegebein was hired by the agency years ago. The fair is part of his life, part of the community's life, he said.

"What I like most is walking around and you see people having a great time," he said.

Follow Sentinel reporter Donna Jones on Twitter @DonnaJonesSCS