



News Release

OFFICE OF THE COUNTY EXECUTIVE

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4th Annual ThinkDIFFERENTLY Thursday at the Dutchess County Fair

Dutchess County Executive Marc Molinaro and Dutchess County Fairgrounds President Andy Imperati invite individuals and families with developmental disabilities to “ThinkDIFFERENTLY Thursday” at the Dutchess County Fair on August 22nd, 2019. Individuals with developmental disabilities and families will be able to enjoy the Dutchess County Fair ahead of the crowds with a special early gate opening at 9 a.m. and sensory-sensitive hours throughout the morning on the carnival midway from 9:30 a.m. to noon.

County Executive Molinaro said, “Annually attracting hundreds of thousands of visitors from throughout the Northeast, the Dutchess County Fair is a distinctly Dutchess annual institution. ‘ThinkDIFFERENTLY Thursday’ has similarly become an annual tradition – not only throughout our county, but also throughout our state and country, with other fairs following our example and offering sensory-friendly offerings. We thank the Dutchess County Agricultural Society and the entire Dutchess County Fairgrounds team for their continued commitment to ‘ThinkDIFFERENTLY’ and collaborate on this inclusive event.”

The Dutchess County Fair is New York State's second-largest county fair, hosting nearly half a million patrons each year, featuring live entertainment, carnival rides, agricultural exhibits, horticultural displays, and so much more. For some individuals and families with developmental disabilities, however, the lights, sounds, and crowds can make it difficult, particularly for those with sensory processing issues, to enjoy all the Dutchess County Fair has to offer. The flashing lights and loud music, in addition to waiting lines for rides, can cause stress and anxiety.

The Fair is offering individuals with developmental disabilities and their families early entry to the fairgrounds on Thursday, August 22nd starting at 9 a.m., an hour before the official 10 a.m. start time. The early opening is a chance to enjoy the fairgrounds, including the animal barns on Livestock Hill and the 4H Exhibit Hall, ahead of the crowds. Although all of the attractions and exhibits will not be open at 9 a.m., the soft opening provides families a chance to ease into their day at the Fair as the fairgrounds prepare for the day ahead, and before the arrival of crowds of fairgoers.

Among the activities to enjoy is the "AgriVenture Kids Activity Tent" which will also open at 9 a.m. The AgriVenture Kids Activity Tent presents a mock farm, showing children how food is grown and sold, and how it does not simply "appear" on grocery shelves. Take part in various farm activities including digging up potatoes from a sandbox, shear a wooden (and woolen) sheep, pick apples from a plywood tree, and milk "Dutchess" the cow. Then take the crop to a warehouse to sell and use sale money to make purchases. AgriVenture will be open for all to enjoy and learn about Dutchess County's agricultural roots.

During the sensory-friendly period, families can also enjoy the fair's Wildlife Center, a corner of the fairgrounds protected by a canopy of leafy trees and evergreens which offers a peaceful respite for animals and visitors alike.

Dutchess County Fairgrounds President Andy Imperati said, “It is really important to make everyone’s experience at the Dutchess County Fair an enjoyable one. We are once again delighted to partner with the County to offer ThinkDIFFERENTLY Thursday this year. What I think is really great is that many other fairs across the country have introduced and incorporated this type of program at their fair. ”

Additionally, the Dutchess County Fair’s carnival midway area will open at 9:30am and will be “sensory sensitive” until 12pm. The flashing lights, music and other sounds and noises will be turned off throughout the morning for who are impacted by sensory processing issues the opportunity to enjoy the rides without the drawbacks that lights and sounds can cause. The early midway opening also means fewer people and little to no waiting time for the carnival rides, making it easier for individuals who need extra time or have difficulty with the distractions of crowds.

County Executive Molinaro’s “ThinkDIFFERENTLY” initiative, launched in 2015, is a call to action to help make Dutchess County a community that is supportive and inclusive for individuals of all abilities. More than 100 villages, towns, cities and counties across New York State and across the nation have made the commitment to “ThinkDIFFERENTLY” in their own communities.

The Dutchess County Fair runs Tuesday, August 20th through Sunday, August 25th, opening at 10am each day. Admission and ride tickets can be purchased online, at an advance sale discount rate, or on-site. Children 11 and under are free. On Thursday, August 22nd, developmental disabilities families coming to enjoy “ThinkDIFFERENTLY” Thursday should enter the Fair at the main ticket gate, at the Welcome Center, conveniently located near accessible parking. For more information and a full schedule of the Dutchess County Fair’s events, see: www.dutchessfair.com/dutchess-fair.

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