



MEDIA RELATIONS DEPARTMENT
PO BOX 389 RHINEBECK, NY 12572
PHONE: [\(845\) 876-4000](tel:(845)876-4000)
FAX: [\(845\) 876-4003](tel:(845)876-4003)

Contact: Colleen Pillus at [\(845\) 486-2000](tel:(845)486-2000) or cpillus@dutchessny.gov

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Think Differently Day Announced for Special Needs Families

July 28th, 2017

Rhinebeck, NY - Dutchess County Executive Marc Molinaro is pleased to announce the Dutchess County Fair will again "ThinkDIFFERENTLY" for individuals and families with special needs. Thursday, August 24th will be "ThinkDIFFERENTLY day at the Fair" and special needs families will be able to enjoy the Dutchess County Fair ahead of the hustle and bustle of crowds with a special early gate opening at 9am as well as special sensory sensitive hours on carnival midway.

Each year, the Dutchess County Fair, New York State's second largest county fair, hosts nearly half a million patrons, and offers visitors a chance to enjoy live entertainment, carnival rides, agricultural exhibits, and horticultural displays, and so much more. However, for some individuals and families with special needs; the lights, sounds, and crowds can make it difficult to enjoy all the Dutchess County Fair has to offer, particularly those individuals with sensory processing issues. The flashing lights and loud music, in addition to waiting lines for rides, can cause stress and anxiety.

The Fair is offering special needs families early entry to the fairgrounds on Thursday, August 24th starting at 9am, an hour before the official 10am start time. Families will have the opportunity to enjoy the fairgrounds, including the animal barns



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on Livestock Hill and the 4H Exhibit Hall, ahead of the crowds. While not all of the attractions and exhibits will be open at 9am, the soft opening provides families a chance to ease into their day at the Fair as the fairgrounds "wake up for the day," ahead of the arrival of the crowds.

Additionally, the carnival midway area will open at 9:30am and will be "sensory sensitive" until 11:30am. The flashing lights, music and other sounds and noises will be turned off until 11:30am to give individuals who are impacted by sensory processing disorders a chance to enjoy the rides without the drawbacks that wait time, lights and sounds can cause.

Dutchess County Fairgrounds General Manager Andy Imperati said, "The Dutchess County Fair is proud to 'ThinkDIFFERENTLY' and offer a fun experience for every family! These adjustments make it a little easier for families with special needs to come and enjoy the Fair and that is our goal."

County Executive Molinaro said, "So many families look forward to the annual Dutchess County Fair all year long and it is one of the many events that make us 'Distinctly Dutchess.'" But for some families, certain of aspects of the fair including the crowds, the lights and the sounds, can cause sensory chaos and mar their experience - while others may not attend all. Making some small changes can have a big impact for a special needs families and I am grateful to Andy Imperati, the Agricultural Society and the Dutchess County Fairgrounds team for taking on our challenge to think differently."



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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.

The Dutchess County Fair runs Tuesday, August 22nd through Sunday, August 27th, opening at 10am each day. Admission and ride tickets can be purchased online, at an advance sale discount rate, or on-site. Children under 12 are free. On Thursday, August 24th, special needs families coming to enjoy "ThinkDIFFERENTLY" Day should enter the Fair at the main ticket gate. For more information and a full schedule of the Dutchess County Fair's events, see: www.dutchessfair.com/.

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