



## FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

**CONTACT:** Vicki Imperati  
vimperati@dutchessfair.com

### **ThinkDIFFERENTLY Thursday at the Dutchess County Fair Returns on Aug. 22nd**

*Inclusive exhibits, sensory friendly space available throughout Fair week*

**Poughkeepsie ...** Dutchess County Executive Sue Serino 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, 2024. Individuals with developmental disabilities and families can enjoy the Dutchess County Fair ahead of the crowds with a special early gate opening at 9 a.m. and sensory-sensitive hours on the carnival midway from 9:30 a.m. to noon. There will also be inclusive events offered throughout the week-long fair schedule.

County Executive Sue Serino said, “The Dutchess County Fair is a community favorite event year after year, and one that we look forward to all year long. With sensory-sensitive ride midway and an earlier opening time, our ‘ThinkDIFFERENTLY’ partnership with the Agriculture Society is a true testament to Dutchess County’s commitment to ensuring an enjoyable experience at the Fair for people of all abilities. As we expand our inclusion efforts with ThinkAccessible, I cannot thank the Ag Society enough for their work to make the Fair entrance easier for those with disabilities with the addition of a new accessible entrance gate. We are excited to see everyone at the Fair!”

New this year, the Dutchess County Agricultural Society has added an accessible entrance at Gate 2, near Livestock Hill, which features less of an incline, wider lanes, wheelchair countertops, handrails and a small gathering area inside the gate.

On ThinkDIFFERENTLY Thursday, individuals with developmental disabilities and their families can enter the Fair an hour before the official 10 a.m. start time. The animal barns on Livestock Hill and the Cornell Cooperative Extension Dutchess County 4-H Exhibit Hall will be open to enjoy ahead of the crowds. Though not every attraction and exhibit will open at 9 a.m., the soft opening provides families a chance to ease into their day at the fair with a quiet start.

The Powers Great American Midway area will open with limited rides, at 9:30 a.m. and will be sensory-sensitive until noon. Flashing lights, music and other sounds and noises will be turned off throughout the morning, giving guests the opportunity to enjoy rides without the distractions that lights and sounds can cause. The early midway opening means shorter wait times for rides, making it easier for those who need extra time or have difficulties with crowds.

Other scheduled happenings on ThinkDIFFERENTLY Thursday include:

9 am ThinkDIFFERENTLY & 4-H's **Flourishing Farmers Showcase** at 4-H Livestock Showing

9am **AgriVenture** – Where does your food come from? Interactive, educational exhibit featuring Milk Dutchess the Cow, digging up vegetables and a Scavenger Hunt.

10 am - The **National Anthem performed by members of the Down Syndrome Association of the Hudson Valley** broadcasted over Fairgrounds' loudspeakers

12pm ThinkDIFFERENTLY & Hidden Hollow Farms **All Abilities English Horse Showcase** at the Horse Show Arena.

All week long, fair goers are encouraged to check out ThinkDIFFERENTLY exhibits and projects submitted by individuals of all ages with disabilities including:

**GrowDIFFERENTLY** – a recycled garden art exhibit in the Horticulture building.

**RockDIFFERENTLY** – garden rock art projects on display in the Hobbies & Crafts Building E

ThinkDIFFERENTLY staff and ambassadors will also host a **sensory-friendly quiet space** throughout Fair week for those who may need a quiet space to get away and regroup. This space, located on Livestock Hill in the Cornell Cooperative Extension tent, will be open daily from 10am to 6pm.

Visitors needing sensory assistance can visit the Fair information booth, across from the Fair souvenir booth, or visit the ThinkDIFFERENTLY/4-H tent on Livestock Hill.

Dutchess County Agricultural Society President Andy Imperati said, “ThinkDIFFERENTLY Thursday has become an important tradition during Fair week that so many look forward to. We are thrilled to continue to expand our ThinkDIFFERENTLY partnership each year – this year we have great new exhibits and the new accessibility gate as part of our ongoing commitment to making the Fair a welcoming and enjoyable experience for everyone.”

The Dutchess County Fair runs Tuesday, Aug. 20 through Sunday, Aug. 25, opening at 10 a.m. each day; children 11 and under are admitted free. Tickets can be purchased online at [dutchessfair.com](http://dutchessfair.com), with discounts available through August 19th. On Thursday, Aug. 22, families coming to enjoy “ThinkDIFFERENTLY Thursday” must 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 [dutchessfair.com/the-fair](http://dutchessfair.com/the-fair). [www.dutchessNY.gov](http://www.dutchessNY.gov)

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