

# 2019 ARMADA FAIR



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## OVERVIEW

# Armada Fair opens its barns, tents, midways and stages Aug. 12-18

**By Jim Bloch**

*For MediaNews Group*

How great is the Armada Fair?

If you're in your late teens or early twenties, your great-great-great-great-great-great grandparents could have gone to the Armada Fair on their first date — in 1872.

That's pretty great.

The 147th edition of the fair opens Monday, Aug. 12 at 74280 Fair Street, in Armada with the headlining country star Scotty McCreery playing the arena stage at 8:30 p.m. McCreery was the Season 10 winner of American Idol in 2011.

How old is the fair?

When the fair began, it would be another 13 years before Karl Benz built the world's first car in Germany in 1885 and another eight years until the Duryea brothers designed the first gas-powered automobile in the U.S.

That's old.

The internal combustion engine plays a big role in today's fair. Not only are cars the main way people get to



Tatyana Hardwick of Sterling Heights and Zoe Zwieseles of Macomb pose for a caricature portrait at the fair.

the fair, but gas-powered vehicles star in the fair all week long, including an ongoing antique tractor exhibition.

Tuesday is the new Monster Truck show in the main arena at 7 p.m.

Wednesday brings the Heidebreicht Chevy Demo-

lition Derby, 7-9 p.m. in the main arena.

On Thursday, for the first time, Figure 8 and Bump & Run racing take place on the same night, Aug. 15, 7-10 p.m. The dual event is sponsored by Dick Huvaere's Richmond Chrysler Dodge Jeep RAM.

On Friday, the Coon Creek Super Kicker Rodeo runs 7-9 p.m. in the main arena.

Tractor and Truck Pulls, sponsored by McLaren Maccomb, are set for noon and 6 p.m. Saturday and all afternoon on Sunday.

**FAIR » PAGE 4**

PHOTOS BY GINA JOSEPH — MEDIANEWS GROUP

Elise Maisano of Almont with her horse Trudy.



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Kellyn Clink with her horse and her little brother Ricky Rood.

## Fair

FROM PAGE 3

Admission to all events is free with paid entry to the fair.

"The Budweiser Clydesdales return to the fair this year, complete with the Dalmatian," said Nick Shafer, a member of the fair board. Visitors may visit and pet the horses all week in their tent off the midway. Expect a daily parade around the fairgrounds in the afternoon.

Homemaker of the State will be crowned at 2 p.m. Saturday on the Grove Stage. Winners of county fair titles from all over the state will compete for the title in the morning.

The fair itself will showcase fine examples of the domestic arts — spinning yarn, weaving, sewing, all kinds of quilting — the culinary arts, fine arts, folk arts, photography, an-



PHOTOS BY GINA JOSEPH — MEDIANEWS GROUP

Sue Vandenberghe of Richmond has been selling almonds at the Armada Fair for 22 years.

tiques, horticulture, floraculture, food preservation and more.

The Detroit Institute of Arts will conduct daily workshops for kids, who

will make a take-home project, said Shafer.

Farm animals play a major role in the fair, which includes livestock competitions and auctions in open

and youth categories. Visitors will be able to see six divisions and 14 classes of dairy cattle, 10 divisions and four dozen classes of beef cattle, a dozen classes



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of sheep, nine divisions and dozens of classes of goats, 49 divisions of rabbits, six classes of saddle horses, draft horses, miniature horses and donkeys, fjords and mules, poultry and other birds.

The mission of the Fair Board, which produces the fair, is "to promote and provide education about agriculture, to build our youth into productive citizens, and to offer entertainment celebrating the traditional values of the community."

Each day of the fair brings a new headlining event.

The fair is huge.

There may be as many as 10,000 individual exhibits at the fair, said Shafer.

For the carnival, Michigan-based Big Rock Amusements features a line-up of 27 unique rides for fair-goers of all ages on Armada Fair midway, including the Giant Wheel that towers 80 feet above the midway and gives riders in the six-passenger gondolas a bird's eye view of everything.

The beer tent features live music each night of the fair, with the alt rockers The Gobies playing Friday and Saturday.

All of the events and exhibits are free with fair admission.

Regular admission for adults (age 13+): \$10.00; children (ages 9-12): \$2.00; children (ages eight and under): free.

Tuesday, August 14, is military appreciation day. Admission is free with valid ID.

Wednesday, August 15 is senior day; admission is \$8 for those 62 and older.

Parking is \$5 a day or \$25 for the week.

Hours of operation: Gates open at 8 a.m. Barns open at 10 a.m. The carnival runs 1-11 p.m. The fairgrounds close daily at midnight.



PHOTO BY GINA JOSEPH — MEDIANEWS GROUP

Wednesday brings the Heidebreicht Chevy Demolition Derby, 7-9 p.m. in the main arena.



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**ENTERTAINMENT**

PHOTOS BY GINA JOSEPH — MEDIANEWS GROUP

The Heidebreicht Chevrolet Demolition Derby is all about surviving and making sure your engine doesn't give out on you.



Grandstand seating is free with paid admission to the fair.

# New monster truck show and slam-bang car racing dominate weeknights at fair

Figure 8 and Bump & Run both run on Thursday night

**By Jim Bloch**

*For MediaNews Group*

The internal combustion engine in all of its shapes and sizes will star on five of the seven days of the 147th Armada Fair.

Monster trucks, slam-bang racing and tractor pulls take turns as main events at the fair.

## Monster trucks

New to the fair this year is the Monster Truck show in the main arena Tuesday, Aug. 13 at 7 p.m.

"We haven't had the Monster Trucks for a few years, but they're really popular," said Nick Shafer, a member of the Armada Fair Board.

Cheer on Bobby Holman, aboard The Beast, Cody Holman atop Stealth, Jim Koehler in the saddle of Avenger and Chris Koehler inside Brutus. A meet and greet open to the public precedes the competition at 6 p.m. in the North Pit Area.

Want a ride in a Monster Truck? Be in the North Pits at 3 p.m., price to be determined.

## Demolition Derby

The Heidebreicht Chevrolet Demolition Derby sets off on its crazy course of action at 7 p.m. Wednesday, Aug. 14.

"In the Demolition Derby, the cars start up back to back, rear end to rear end," said Shafer, a fair board member, discussing the



Byron Vollen of Berville gets ready to wet down the track for the 2017 fair's demolition derby. Vollen has been helping out at the fair for more than 45 years.

race last year. "They ram into each other and keep doing it until one driver remains. The last car standing wins."

The derby is perhaps the favorite event of motorsport fans at the fair.

It's all about surviving and making sure your engine doesn't give out on you.

The demolition derby runs 7-10 p.m. in the main arena. Grandstand seating is free with paid admission to the fair.

## Figure 8/Bump and Run

Combining two fair favorites into a single night, Thursday, Aug. 15 brings the Dick Huvaere's Figure 8 and Bump and Run into the main arena, 7-10 p.m.

"Figure 8 racing is a form of banger



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PHOTOS BY GINA JOSEPH — MEDIANEWS GROUP

Josh Stinson of Richmond at his first Armada Fair derby in 2017.



The demolition derby runs 7-10 p.m. in the main arena.



The derby is perhaps the favorite event of motorsport fans at the fair.

racing in which automobiles race on a track that purposely intersects itself, increasing the risk of collisions," according to the fair website.

The intersection of the 8-shaped track provides the biggest danger, where drivers try to hit or avoid other cars, depending on their place in the race.

In Bump and Run, smaller, faster cars race around a circular track with tight turns and bumps built into the straightaways, knocking each other out of the way to take the lead.

Shafer said that each race will feature fewer cars than when the races were held on separate nights, but the streamlined action will be wilder than ever.

Seating in the grandstands, which open

at 5 p.m., is free with paid admission to the fair.

### Tractor and truck pulls

The tractor and truck pulls are the main events at the Armada Fair on Saturday and Sunday, Aug. 17-18 and they picked up a new sponsor for 2019 — McLaren Macomb.

The Saturday action begins at noon and runs until 8 p.m. The more farm-style tractors begin the day and the super stock tractors rule the night. On Sunday, the truck move to center-arena, with the pulls begin at noon and run until 5 p.m.

*Jim Bloch is a freelance writer. Contact him at [bloch.jim@gmail.com](mailto:bloch.jim@gmail.com).*

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**ENTERTAINMENT**

PHOTO BY GINA JOSEPH — MEDIANEWS GROUP

The midway will be filled with bright lights and endless possibilities for fun.

# Big Rock Amusements promises 'America's brightest, cleanest midway'

**By Jim Bloch**  
*For MediaNews Group*

The wildly lighted carnival midway is the pounding heart of every successful country fair. The 147th edition of the Armada promises one of the Midwest's best in the midway presented by Michigan's own Big Rock Amusements.

The company boasts "America's brightest, cleanest midway" on its website.

The midway will look great and smell even better with the sizzling scents of cheeseburgers, fries, chicken-on-a-stick, elephant ears, Italian sausage,

funnel cakes, corn dogs and deep-fried Oreos threading through the LED lights and the sparkling night.

Among the most spectacular rides, be sure to look out for the Giant Wheel, a Ferris wheel that stands 80 feet tall and provides rides high over the midway in four passenger gondolas.

The Beast swings riders out at an angle of 75° and spins them 15 revolutions per minute at the end of a gargantuan green arm that lights up in breathtaking fashion at night.

The Air Flyer swings riders in gondolas suspended by wires high over the midway. "At over 100 feet tall,

the Air Flyer towers over the midway and is one of the tallest rides of its kind to travel in the U.S.," says the website.

Other popular big-time rides include Ring of Fire — get upside down! — the double Ferris wheel known as the Sky Wheel and The Himalaya, a merry-go-round that's lost all control, gained strobe lights and high powered music.

Somewhat less stomach-turning rides include Tilt-a-Whirl, dodge-'em cars, a giant ship called Sea Ray and the Wacky Worm.

Little kids will have an array of rides of their own, such as the Grand Carousel,



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Midway games of chance and skill add to the adventure of the midway. Get ready for Shoot Out the Star, Hoop Shot and ring tosses. Win a stuffed animal or a live goldfish!

Matt McDonagh grew up working for his dad in McDonagh's Amusements. He and his wife Kelly own Big Rock and travel throughout Michigan, Ohio, Georgia, North Carolina, Tennessee and Florida with their high-quality family-friendly midway.

The carnival opens at 3 p.m., Monday, Aug. 12 and at noon Tuesday-Sunday. It runs until 11 p.m. each night. All day armbands are \$25, all week \$60. Watch for specials. On Sunday, the final night of the fair, the Last Blast begins at 5 p.m. when all rides are two-for-one.

*Jim Bloch is a freelance writer.*



PHOTOS BY GINA JOSEPH — MEDIANEWS GROUP

Among the most spectacular rides, be sure to look out for the Giant Wheel, a Ferris wheel that stands 80 feet tall and provides rides high over the midway in four passenger gondolas.



There will be plenty of rides on the midway at this year's Armada Fair.



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## ACTIVITIES

# Spotlight on daily events: Kids activities, DIA workshops, eating contests and more



There are plenty of fun things to do and see for all ages at the Armada Fair.

**By Jim Bloch**  
For MediaNews Group

The Armada Fair presents a slate of unique events each day, such as country star Scotty McCreery on Monday and the Coon Creek Rodeo on Friday. It also presents a number of different activities that are repeated on a near-daily basis throughout the fair.

Free children's activities will be held in the Grove, noon until 5 p.m. Tuesday-Friday, Aug. 13-16.

"The Grove is the site for a lot of free events," said Nick Shafer, a member of the Armada Fair Board,

who also heads up the fair's social media outreach.

The daily children's activities include a candy scramble, rope making, face painting and the crafting of balloon animals.

In the same time slot, look for the Detroit Institute of Arts to lead a workshop for young people. All participants will work on a project that they will be able to take home, said Shafer. The event is sponsored by Macomb County Department of Health and Human Services and Plymouth Physical Therapy.

For the extra-hungry fairgoers, a different eating contest will be held at 5 p.m. Aug. 13-17 in the Grove.

On Tuesday, skip lunch and get ready for the Tivoli's Pizza eating contest. It's hard to get sick of eating pizza, and Wednesday brings the Jet's Pizza eating contest. On Thursday, it's time for the year's biggest dessert with the Achatz Pie eating contest. On Friday, the event takes a juicier and healthier turn with the Blake's Farm watermelon eating contest. On Saturday, it's eat-your-vegetables day with the Armada Lions' corn on the cob eating contest. All the contests are free.

Four other daily events are worth a closer look: The Great American Side Show, the Chainsaw Man of Michigan, Mikie Buggs and the Animal Oasis.

All shows are free with admission to the fair.

The Great American Side Show Company brings "the classic circus sideshow experience to a new generation," according to its website.



PHOTOS BY GINA JOSEPH — MEDIANEWS GROUP

Jonathan Filippo Morrison of Roseville fishes for a great blue plastic shark.

Walking on hot coals impressed Nick Shafer, fair board member, at last year's show. So did the knife swallower.

The company will perform four shows daily in the Grove area during the fair.

Dr. Emil M. Szkipala is the Chainsaw Man of Michigan. Szkipala carves up everything in sight Tuesday, Aug. 13-Sunday, Aug. 18 at

1, 3 and 5 p.m. daily just east of the Grove Area.

Mike Buggs brings his alligator and exotic animal show to the Grove area everyday during the fair at 11:30 a.m., 1:30 p.m. and 4:30 p.m.

The Michigan-based Animal Oasis shows off its birds, exotic and hoofed animals near the Pig Gate.

Animal Oasis opens daily during the fair at 8 a.m.





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## ENTERTAINMENT

# Country star Scotty McCreery headlines fair's opening night

A dozen additional bands play daily through Aug. 18

By Jim Bloch

For MediaNews Group

The country star Scotty McCreery headlines the 147th annual Armada Fair, taking the main arena stage at 8:30 p.m. on opening night, Monday, Aug. 12.

McCreery, who is touring in support of his fifth album, "Seasons Change," hits Armada after stops in Sylvania, Ohio, Aug. 10, Fishers, Ind., Aug. 9 and Reno, Nev., Aug. 4. He and his band will barely have time to kick the arena dust from his boots before he heads to Harrisonburg, Va. for a show at the Rockingham County Fair, Aug. 15.

Country music writers have been swooning over "Seasons Change." Rolling Stone magazine named the release one of the 40 Best Country and Americana Albums of 2018 and Whiskey Riff pegged it in the top 30. The album debuted as Number 1 on Billboard's Country Album Chart.

McCreery co-wrote all of the songs on the album. He recently completed a video in support of "In Between," the third single released from the album. The song's lyrics echo one of the lessons McCreery said years of touring has taught him.

"One of the things I've learned through traveling around the country is that

people are a lot more alike than we are different," McCreery says on his website. "We're all rarely 100 percent one thing or the other. We usually are somewhere in between."

McCreery was the Season 10 winner of American Idol in 2011. His first album that same year, "Clear as Day," went platinum.

He and his wife Gabi are big supporters of St. Jude Children's Research Hospital.

Family Tradition Band opens for McCreery at 7:30 p.m.

The performance is sponsored by Keihin Michigan Manufacturing LLC and seats in the grandstands are free with paid admission to fair; VIP infield armbands are available for \$10.

Music plays a daily role in the fair.

On Tuesday at 7:30 p.m., the Blue Top Blues Band takes over the Grove Stage. The EMC Band plays the refreshment tent at 8 p.m.

On Wednesday, Toxic Candy plays the Grove stage at 7:30 p.m. The Family Tradition Band takes over the beer tent, where it's Guys Night, at 8 p.m.

On Thursday, the Blue Ridge Band entertains on the Grove stage at 7:30 p.m. while Family Tradition returns to the beer tent for Ladies Night.

The St. Clair-based alternative rock band, The Gobies, whose sets are interspersed with classic rock and country favorites, play the beer tent Friday and Saturday at 8 p.m.

Jim Bloch is a freelance writer. Contact him at [bloch.jim@gmail.com](mailto:bloch.jim@gmail.com).



FACEBOOK PHOTO

Toxic Candy plays the Grove stage at 7:30 p.m. Wednesday, Aug. 14.



PHOTO COURTESY OF THE ARMADA FAIR WEBSITE

Scott McCreery is the musical headliner for the 147th annual Armada Fair.

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