

News

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The great outdoors: Hampshire County to see its first-ever outdoor show at the fairgrounds this weekend

KENIA ITZEP Review Staff

Mar 8, 2023



Collin Waybright, who has been working with birds of prey since he was 14, is one of the youngest Master Class Falconers in West Virginia.

AUGUSTA — Hampshire County Fairgrounds in Augusta will host the first Potomac Highlands Sportsman & Outdoor Show on March 11 and 12, rain, shine or snow.

Last year, the Hampshire County Convention and Visitor's Bureau Director, Tina Ladd, announced the plans for the outdoor show. Those plans are finally coming to fruition with the two-day event packed with several happenings that will bring in residents and out-of-towners.

"My whole goal is to increase overnight stays in Hampshire County and to contribute to the local economy," Ladd said.

Mirrored after the Great American Outdoor Show in Pennsylvania – but on a much smaller scale – the event will highlight a scene for hunting, fishing and camping enthusiasts.

Ladd said Saturday's turkey-calling contest could have been its own event entirely, admitting that it is far more serious than she anticipated. Registration starts at 10 a.m. at the Fairgrounds CEOS building. The top six contestants in all six divisions will receive cash prizes.

She hopes to have the contest livestreamed.

"It's going to be inside because you need to have the right acoustics, you need to have silence, people can't be going in and out," she said.

Contestants must be National Wild Turkey Federations members; visit cometohampshire.com/wildinwv.com for more information and to pre-register.

The West Virginia Division of Natural Resources will do official deer scorings on Saturday, first come, first serve; people can witness and learn the ins and outs of official scoring.

On a similar but separate note, the show invites folks to bring their mounted bucks for the "Big Buck Contest" to win various prizes – all registered hunters must comply with DNR rules and regulations. Just Pawn It LLC and 2A Firearms will have guns available for purchase after a background check and proof of a valid state ID.

"I think it's going to be primarily geared toward hunting and fishing, but I believe that anybody who comes is going to find something that interests them," Ladd said of the inaugural event.

Eastern West Virginia Community & Technical College will be there to provide outreach to people of all ages, particularly younger community members, to see what is available.

Ladd mentioned that there would be a bounce house for kids and that Susan Carroll with the West Virginia Department of Environmental Protection would lead some of the children's activities.

Ladd added that though she's excited about all aspects of the show, she is especially excited about the Laurel Fork Falconer, who is one of the youngest licensed Master Class Falconers in West Virginia.

Additionally, Local Bone Shack Outdoors celebrities will be there for a meet and greet. Authors David R. Long and Michael A. Sawyer will attend the show for book signings.

There will be around 40 vendors during both outdoor show days, and four vendors will be available for food; Augusta Ruritan Club, B-Rad's Pizza, Bricello's Grilled Formaggio with grilled cheeses that will melt your taste buds and Gig's BBQ featuring their drunken sassy moonshine sauce.

Entrance wristbands are \$5 for ages 13 and up and \$1 for ages 6-12.

"Everyone that I talked to, and I've talked to everyone who's coming, is super, super nice," she said. "I think when people come, they're going to feel right at home because I think that everybody that they're dealing with there, it'll feel like it's your neighbor."

The outdoor show will run from 10 a.m. to 7 p.m. on Saturday, March 10 and 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. on Sunday, March 11.

Local business such as Tavern 29 and El Centro Italian and Mexican Family Restaurant in Augusta along with American Legion Post 137 are welcoming show attendees with featured drinks. Check out Rt. 50 Biscuits and Burgers, Four N's Pizza, Anderson's Corner and Subs Rose & Jane Vintage for more features.

Visit cometohampshire.com for more information and see the show's digital booklet. Visit Potomac Highlands Sportsman & Outdoor Show Facebook page for more details.