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***Florida State Fair rolls out more family entertainment than ever before
#1 selling Shopkins toys to make rare appearance during fair***

(January 30, 2017 – Tampa, FL) – Ask almost any adult what the best selling toy was for 2015 and most would guess one of the toys from the blockbuster Star Wars movie. Little girls know better however, as they drove sales of the tiny Shopkins line from Australian toy company Moose Toys to the #1 spot, filling four of the top 10 positions.

This was no surprise to Cheryl Flood, the new executive director of the Florida State Fair and mom to four-year old daughter Alexa.

“It is an initiative of mine to bring the most popular children’s entertainment to the fair. Everyone knows we have the largest midway in the U.S. and some of the craziest food ever invented, but I also want to be known for outstanding family and children’s entertainment. It’s our children that will keep the fair strong for generations to come,” said Flood.

Booking Shopkins was her strongest move in that direction so far. Sales of Shopkins toys were showing a 98 percent increase over 2015 going into the Christmas season, and the popularity of the brand’s YouTube channels has skyrocketed. Securing characters Kooky Cookie and Apple Blossom for appearances at the fair wasn’t quite so easy, however.

“We searched the entire country for the what we believe to be the best in family entertainment,” said Flood.

At conventions and trade shows, she found there was lots of family entertainment available but very few entertainment agencies were able to produce the top name brands Flood was interested in bringing to the fair. After numerous calls to agents and even reaching out to the official Shopkins licensing company, Flood was finally able to secure a rare appearance of the wildly popular tiny toys.

“We were able to get them for meet and greets all fair days,” enthused Flood, and she is expecting large crowds of youngsters to greet the characters.

In addition to these popular toys come to life, the 2017 Florida State Fair will also feature acts from national TV Shows such as America’s Got Talent, exotic animals and death-defying acts of daring, all FREE with the price of admission.

“Where else, for less than the price of a movie ticket, can you see sea lions perform right before your eyes, experience a spectacular Big Top Circus, feed a giraffe from your own hand and see giant bears dance? There is no better family entertainment value in the state than the Florida State Fair,” said Flood.

The 2017 Florida State Fair is packed with hours of entertainment for guests young and old. Among the most popular attractions for 2017 are:

Shopkins – Shopkins are tiny, collectable plastic figurines modeled after items found in a grocery store. Manufactured by Moose Toys, an Australian toy company, each Shopkin has a unique name and personality. Two of the beloved and ultra rare characters – Kooky Cookie and Apple Blossom – will come to life at the Florida State Fair for a rare meet and greet with their adoring young fans.

Kooky Cookie and Apple Blossom will hold court for several hours each of the 12 days of the Fair. In keeping with the Fair’s 2017 theme, “Picture Yourself at the Fair,” children and their parents can have their photo taken with these two BFFs! – *Multiple appearances each of the 12 days of the Fair. Free with the price of admission.*

Sweet: A Tasty Journey – Making its first ever appearance at a State Fair is Sweet: A Tasty Journey, an interactive exhibit that utilizes games to explore the history of candy and its role in popular culture. There also is a giant Candy Land game perfect for fun photo ops, a “beanboozled” taste test challenge (grass flavored jelly bean anyone?) and candy-inspired art, including amazing replicas of famous paintings like the Mona Lisa, created with jelly beans.

Visitors also learn about the ingredients used to make their favorite treats from a “farm to fork” perspective and get schooled in the nuts and bolts of the confection-making process. All this is punctuated with fascinating stories of famous candy makers and chocolatiers. *The Sweet exhibit is located in the Florida Center and is free with the price of admission.*

Sea Lion Splash – As the only traveling sea lion exhibit in the United States, Sea Lion Splash is a fun and unique animal performance showcasing Californian and South American sea lions. For guests who like to get up close and personal with the sea lions, there is a unique photo opportunity available after most presentations. When the Sea Lion Splash exhibit is not on the road, the stars of the show make their home in Myakka City. – *Multiple performances each of the 12 days of the Fair. Free with the price of admission.*

K-9s in Flight – These athletic pups perform each day, showcasing their amazing skills and training. See the dogs perform high jumping acts or make incredible Frisbee catches, all in a fast-paced, high-flying atmosphere. The show also highlights the importance of pet adoption, exercise, nutrition and the special bond between humans and dogs. All of the stars of K-9s in Flight have been rescued or adopted from U.S. shelters. – *Multiple performances each of the 12 days of the Fair. Free with the price of admission.*

Circus Hollywood Under The Big Top – Some of the most death-defying circus acts can be seen daily under the Big Top tent on the grounds. Watch as the singing ringmaster presents a spectacular trapeze show, incredible chair balancing performers teeter high in the air, some of the funniest clowns in the country delight with their antics, and beautiful Friesian horses perform along with camels and dogs. Don't miss the incredible globe of death riders as they race around the inside of a steel cage. This high-energy show has state-of-the-art lights and sound, all presented under the Fair's giant Big Top. – *Multiple performances each of the 12 days of the Fair. Free with the price of admission.*

Butterfly Encounter – Not only can Fairgoers observe these delicate creatures up close, they also can feed them nectar from a sponge. The screened-in encounter contains more than 250 butterflies including monarchs, swallowtails and painted ladies. – *In the Agriculture Hall of Fame Building. Free with the price of admission.*

Hollywood Racing Pigs – On your mark – get set – go! Watch cute little porkers make their way around the track. Join in rooting for your favorite as they race to entertain and win a treat. – *Multiple performances each of the 12 days of the Fair. Free with the price of admission.*

Giraffic Park Exotic Menagerie – Join Twigs the Giraffe and other amazing exotic animals up close in the Giraffic Park Exotic Menagerie. Where else can you feed a giraffe, get a close-up look at a llama or learn more about some of the most beautiful creatures on earth? *Open each of the 12 days of the Fair. Free with the price of admission*

Welde's Big Bear Show – The Weldes once again bring their beautiful family of bruins to the Fair. The Welde's bears are ambassadors for their counterparts in the wild, delivering a vital message of conservation and preservation for all. Learn about the bears while seeing them interact with their handlers – only at the Fair! – *Multiple performances each of the 12 days of the Fair. Free with the price of admission.*

Cracker Country — Throughout the Florida State Fair, Cracker Country comes to life with skilled artisans and historical educators who demonstrate crafts and life skills that would have been important to Florida settlers of the 19th century. *Open all fair days until 6pm.*

Florida State Fair Tractor Pull – Tractor Pulls use modified farm tractors in the world's heaviest motorsport competition to pull a weighted sled along a track. It's not about speed – it's about going the distance. – *Feb. 12 at 2pm in the Equestrian Center Covered Arena. Free with the price of admission.*

Sunshine State Lawnmower Races – The MOW the merrier – join in the fun! A dreaded weekend chore is reinvented into a competitive sport. Sanctioned by the United State Lawn Mower Association, there are 11 racing classes from wild to mild. – *Feb. 18 at noon and Feb. 19 at noon, in the Equestrian Center Covered Arena. Free with the price of admission.*

Budweiser Clydesdales – The iconic Clydesdales, with their energetic personalities and elegance, will be on display for the first three days of the Fair. – *Feb. 9-11, in the Equestrian Center. Free with the price of admission.*

Vex State Robotics Championship – The Robotics Education & Competition Foundation sponsors competitions that test the technical and interpersonal skills of students that they will need to succeed in the 21st Century. – *Feb. 17 (middle and high school) and Feb. 18 (elementary and middle), during Fair hours on the Coca Cola Stage, Entertainment Hall. Free with the price of admission.*

Florida State Fair Draft Horse Pull Championship – Watch as these majestic animals compete by pulling a weighted sled for a short distance. The most powerful equine athlete will be declared the winner. – *Feb. 16 at noon in the Equestrian Center Covered Arena. Free with the price of admission.*

In addition to the exhibits and performances throughout the Fairgrounds there will be Strolling Acts in various locations to keep Fairgoers entertained for all 12 days. These include:

- ***Rock-it Robot*** – More than just a costume character, Rock-it is a high tech body puppet. This nine-foot tall gentle giant stands head and shoulders above the crowds.
- Marc Dobson's ***One-Man Band*** – The One Man Band and Son is a one of a kind show of extreme music with comedy for all ages.
- ***Those Funny Little People*** – a one-of-a-kind entertainment troupe of life-size puppets who dance, sing and spread good cheer. As seen on “America’s Got Talent.”

The Florida State Fair runs from Feb. 9-20. Discounted tickets can be purchased online at floridastatefair.com and at Walgreens throughout the state through Feb. 8.

For more information about the fair, including special attractions and HUGE discounts visit: www.floridastatefair.com. Follow the Fair on Facebook at www.facebook.com/floridastatefairgrounds and on Twitter at <https://twitter.com/flstfairgrounds> for the latest updates and announcements.

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About the Florida State Fair Authority

The mission of the Florida State Fair Authority and its Board of Directors is to create positive entertainment experiences through: the annual Florida State Fair; a variety of

year-round events; quality competitive programs; a commitment to agriculture, education and community service, and a focus on new opportunities.

The Florida State Fair Authority does not receive state, county or city tax dollars. Operations are funded by revenue generated by the annual Florida State Fair and the rental of Fairgrounds facilities to outside entities throughout the year. For more information about the Florida State Fair Authority, go to www.floridastatefair.com.