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Concert lineup, attractions help the 2017 Santa Barbara County Fair top last year's attendance numbers

SANTA MARIA—The 2017 Santa Barbara County Fair is a wrap, with great weather, fantastic acts on the KCOY Main Stage and the Sun Center Stage, beautiful lights on lots of fun carnival rides, incredible food offerings, and cool free exhibits like Bug-ology, where scores of fairgoers got the chance to taste edible insects.

Fair officials reported that the combination resulted in a 6.6% increase in total event attendance over 2016, with an increase of 9,854 visits to a grand total of 158,652. Along with the attendance increase, carnival rides during the five-day run increased 9%. Food and beverage sales also showed significant growth, with preliminary numbers indicating an increase of about 6%. Junior livestock auction sales information is not yet available.

Santa Maria Fairpark CEO Richard Persons said, "We're thrilled with the results of the 2017 Fair. It indicates that the community appreciates what a great value the Fair is, with strong entertainment, great food, fun rides, lots of animals, and great weather. The strong showing at the gate tells us that we put together the right combination of promotions and attractions to interest people, even with two large wildfires to compete with."

Ticket promotions for the 2017 Fair included discounts of 20% to 40% on single day admission and season tickets purchased in advance, along with an all-day ride wristband sold in advance for a 28% discount. Promotional days during the event included a \$1 admission on Thursday for seniors aged 62 and older, and a free admission on Saturday for active duty members of the armed forces.

Attractions for 2017 included four nights of main stream musical and comedy acts presented in the Bud Light Concert Series on the KCOY main Stage, with .38 Special, Gabriel "Fluffy" Iglesias, John Michael Montgomery, and Leann Rimes all appearing. Fair officials consider the Gabriel Iglesias show to be the largest crowd ever drawn to a main stage act at the Santa Barbara County Fair, with a crowd estimated at 8,500 people. In order to accommodate the large numbers, a video wall was placed on the Sun Center Stage so that people arriving late could still see the show from a good vantage point. Persons said, "We added chairs for this show, and had about \$10,000 in additional expenses for the night with the chairs and the video wall, but it was worth it so that our community could see one of the hottest acts in the world

right now for just the price of an admission ticket.” Other attractions on the Sun Center Stage included Central Coast crowd favorites Steppin’ Out, Burning James and the Funky Flames, and Ricky Montijo and the Mojitos.

The Fair presented full exhibit halls including nearly 5,000 competitive exhibits with blue ribbon winners in many hundreds of categories, and approximately 2,000 head of livestock. The Rabobank Discovery Pavilion featured Bug-Ology, an interactive educational exhibit all about insects in the Armory Building, while the Ag Pavilion moved to the Park Plaza building. A full complement of slicers and dicers competed with beds, skin care products, fancy knife sets, and other wares inside the Marketplace Pavilion presented by Honda and Toyota of Santa Maria. The Marketplace Pavilion also included the new CoastHills wine bar feature, where fairgoers looking for a respite could get a glass of wine and listen to acoustic guitar from a variety of local musicians.

Strolling acts could be found throughout the event making free mini-shows available at all hours. They included Sterling the Bubblesmith, a surprise hit as he created clouds of soap bubbles for children to play in, and two princesses strolling the park in character and providing photo opportunities.

For more information about the Santa Maria Fairpark, visit: www.santamariafairpark.com

About the Santa Maria Fairpark

The Santa Maria Fairpark serves as the hub for major events and community activities on California’s Central Coast. The state-owned facility hosts the annual Santa Maria Valley Strawberry Festival, which attracts more than 70,000 people and is home to its headlining event the Santa Barbara County Fair, which is attended by more than 150,000 people.