

# RAGBRAI

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day from noon to 2 p.m. with his selection of original and classic hits.

A fun contest for the day, the Colfax RAGBRAI committee is gathering entries for a Port-a-Potty decorating contest. For \$40, people can sponsor and decorate one of 30 porta potties that will be in Colfax for the event.

Decorating starts at 6 a.m. the day of the ride and must be completed by 9 a.m. All decorations must be removed by 5 p.m.

"RAGBRAI has brought different local volunteers out of the woodwork to help the city with different aspects of providing hospitality to the cyclists," Patterson said. "Volunteers are bringing in flatbed trucks to make stages, and a lot of enthusiastic volunteers are going to work the beer tent. The Colfax-Mingo High School football team will be manning three different free watering stations on the route in town, the PEO ladies are providing a free phone charging station on the Colfax Public Library lawn and the Howard Street Christian Church is going to open up their building for an air conditioned space and refreshments. Some local businesses along the route are going to be open or providing hospitality, as well."

New for RAGBRAI, signs will be added about the history of Leo Welker, a young Black champion cyclist who lived in Colfax and Grinnell at the turn-of-the-last century. The signs will be displayed near Coburn Funeral Homes on West Howard Street, the site of his home that also happens to be part of the bike route.

"That project was fun to research and brought to light an aspect of forgotten history about Colfax's once large Black community at the turn of the last century and early 20th Century," Patterson said.

# Showman

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point. The same thing occurred this year when the former Jasper County Fair Queen finished the contest. Still, she kept a positive attitude.

"I'm feeling a lot of excitement and I'm really excited for Rylin," Zaabel said. "She's worked really hard these past couple of days in practicing with her animals. She has a lot of background on her livestock, too. So I'm very proud of her and I'm happy to named reserve champion showman."

Zaabel was also thankful for the opportunity to show off her skills and everything she had learned in the past 12 hours. The day before the contest, Zaabel was named the senior beef showman, leaving her a small window of time to practice for the main event. "It was a quick turnaround," she said.

The contest itself — sponsored by State Savings Bank and named after a past board member who died at age 33 — celebrated its 10th show this year. Zaabel was grateful for the opportunity to participate in the contest, and to spend time with and get to know six other girls.

"And get to know six other species of livestock that I'm not used to being around," Zaabel said, noting it was the first time she had ever even touched a llama.



Rylin Titus, left, took home the championship during the Supreme Showmanship contest at the 2023 Jasper County Fair. Lauren Zaabel, right, took reserve champion.

Although it certainly didn't look it, Titus said she was very nervous at first. But when she completed the first showing she felt fine and way more confident to take on the contest. Titus kept tell-

ing herself all throughout the contest that no matter the outcome she was just proud that she made it to begin with.

Of course, she learned some valuable lessons along the way that she

hopes to take with her well beyond livestock shows at the Jasper County Fair.

"I've learned to always try new things, like me trying the new animals," she said. "And I learned to always put the hard work in."

# Projects

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"If there are individual landowners who are interested in this, they need to reach out to the Soil and Water Conservation Districts or the Iowa Department of Agriculture and Land Stewardship," Talsma said.

"That is who is coordinating the program and who will get them signed up for the program."

When that list of projects has been completed and IDALS believes it has a sufficient number of projects in that package, it will come before the county board of supervisors to bid out. Talsma said the county

just gets to do "all the behind the scenes stuff" related to the project.

As an outdoorsman and a person with a farming background, Talsma said there are big benefits to these types of projects. Regardless of the cause of nitrogen runoff and whether soil erosion is perceived to be "a minor or major

program," he said anything Iowans can do to decrease them is a good thing.

"It shouldn't matter where you stand on the subject," he said of soil and water quality issues, which he noted are controversial topics in Iowa. "We're supposed to be good stewards of the land. Our livelihood

depends on the land. So why wouldn't we want to do everything we can to take better care of the land?"

In a past meeting, Matt McDonald, water quality initiative projects coordinator at IDALS, said bioreactors and saturated buffers act like a kidney. Whenever a field is tiled and drains into

a waterway or ditch, the bioreactors and saturated buffers intercept that and filter the water before it is released.

IDALS has completed similar projects in Boone, Dallas, Polk and Story Counties.

Jasper County Soil and Water Conservation District can be contacted at 641-792-4116.



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While I wasn't able to attend, I heard it was a wonderful occasion and showed us clearly how joy can be found in even the darkest of situations.

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