

Virginia Association of Fairs, Inc.
2013 Fair Person of the Year Nomination
Name of Nominee: Mack A. Wright, Jr., Fair Manager
Caroline County Agricultural Fair Association, Inc.

Service:

Mack has been manager of the Caroline County Agricultural Fair Association since 2003 when it became a non-profit, 501(c)3 organization. The busiest time of his fair manager career has been since 2009. Up to that time the annual fair was held in temporary locations throughout the county. In February 2009 the fair association received the donation of a forty-acre site on which to establish a permanent fairground home and that is when the frenzy began under the leadership of Fair Manager Mack Wright. The task at hand was to develop the fairground site prior to the July 2009 annual fair. Required would be the establishment of electrical and central water infrastructure along with site work. Equally challenging would be the accomplishment of these tasks with very little money in the non-profit fair treasury and with the country in dire economic times. Mack stepped up to the challenge by contributing not only over 800 hours of volunteer work but contributing over \$15,000 worth of heavy equipment usage. As the local electric company quoted electrical installation costs of over \$10,000, Mack came up with the "Light Up the Fair" fundraising activity. For a minimum contribution of one hundred dollars, individuals were simply promised that their name would be listed on a special banner to be displayed during the fair days. Mack, taking advantage of his lifelong contacts, was instrumental in raising the \$10,650 needed to pay for the essential electrical service. The 2009 Fair opened as planned with a ribbon cutting ceremony and with all local government officials in attendance.

As the enthusiasm for a permanent fairground home was growing, Mack took on the challenge of organizing one-day fundraising events in order to obtain the money needed to pay the new electric bill and improvements. In early 2010 the fair association wished to replace the wasteful practice of renting tents with building permanent structures on the fairground site. Once again with little money in the treasury, Mack spearheaded the plan to solicit community business leaders and give them an opportunity to sponsor buildings. Twenty-five thousand dollars was obtained which was enough to build a 3360 sq. ft. pavilion and a 4800 sq. ft. exhibit building. Since the "Light Up the Fair" fundraising campaign had been so successful in 2009, Mack launched the idea to have a "Build the Barn" campaign. Once again contributors of a minimum of one hundred dollars were promised that their name would be on signage to be displayed in the barn. This campaign raised over \$21,000 and a 9120 sq. ft. agricultural pavilion was built. The 2010 Fair opened on time with a 'Dedication of Buildings' ceremony. The story goes on with Mack soliciting a sponsor for the 576 sq. ft. welcome center, which was added in 2011 and in 2012 soliciting the sponsorships for two 3360 sq. ft. buildings. He is already scheming on how to fund and build an information booth and an entertainment pavilion in 2013.

Using his many years of experience in the construction industry, Mack has been able to obtain the best prices for building materials and has been able to effortlessly work with the county officials on obtaining necessary permits. Additionally, many of his business and social contacts have come forward during these building phases volunteering their labor and donating goods. Mack has personally contributed thousands of hours of time and thousands of dollars of equipment usage. Visitors from other fair associations throughout the Commonwealth come to the Caroline County Ag Fairground and are in awe at what has been accomplished in these four short years.

As the permanent fairground home has taken shape under Mack's leadership and guidance, the four-day annual fair has also seen growth in attendance and in the number of activities that can now be provided. His personal enthusiasm for the fair does not end on the last day of the Fair each July but continues 12 months out of the year as he is instrumental in organizing other fundraising events and helping to establish the fairground rental program.

Industry Involvement:

Mack was born into the county fair world, as his father was one of the leaders involved with the Caroline County Fair in the 1960's before the sponsoring Ruritan Club disbanded in 1970. Mack's participation included submitting entries of farm crops, showing Angus cattle and setting up the fair exhibit areas. Youth fair participation also extended to the regional Fredericksburg Agricultural Fair and the State Fair of Va.

In the mid 1990's the Madison Ruritan Club, an organization in which Mack is a charter member, became involved with the fair revival endeavor and Mack was there to help revive the Caroline County Agricultural Fair. Since that time he has devoted thousands of hours to the Caroline County Agricultural Fair as it has become a non-profit organization. He has served as the Fair Manager since 2003. In his role as manager, he attends the regional VAF fair meetings hosted by Field Days of the Past and the VAF Conventions. He is a point of contact for advice and consultation for other Virginia fairs. In the summer of 2012 he spent time visiting other fairs to obtain ideas on site development and programs which may be helpful for the Caroline County Agricultural Fair Association.

Community Involvement:

Mack is a life-long resident of Caroline County, VA. During his high school years he was involved with the Future Farmers of America and achieved that organization's highest honor of American Farmer. At that time he also became a certified emergency medical technician, which started his 38-year involvement with the Ladysmith Volunteer Rescue Squad. He has attained the honor of being a lifetime member of that organization of which he has been the current president for over a decade. Work in the emergency services field has extended to being a

member of the county committee, which established the Caroline County Emergency Services Commission.

Other community related work has been to serve as a member of the Caroline County Taxation and Equalization Board for two assessment cycles. Involvement with the Caroline County Public School System has been varied as a member of the Superintendent's Advisory Committee from 2002-2007 and as a member on the Planning Committee for a new 950-student elementary school in the mid 2000's. With three children, Mack has also been involved with school booster club fundraising activities and with the local 4-H Livestock Club. In 2008 he became a member of the Caroline County School Board, having been appointed to fill the term of the previous member who had passed away. In November 2009 he was elected to a new term and in 2011 was re-elected. He has served as the chairman of that board.

As previously stated, Mack is a charter member of the Madison Ruritan Club, the organization responsible for the re-birth of the Caroline County Agricultural Fair in the 1990's. His involvement with that organization has been in leadership roles and with that organization's fundraising activities.

Career Highlights:

Since 1975 Mack has been a farmer and a general building contractor in Caroline County and the central Virginia region. Being self-employed has afforded him the opportunity to devote time to the Fair and the varied aforementioned organizations. As lifelong friends of his parents are elderly, he is the one they call for help with all types of household emergencies and non-emergencies. Service is always provided at the time of the request and always without charge.

Fair Manager Mack A. Wright, Jr. is a well-respected, trust-worthy, reliable and dependable person and friend. I am honored to nominate him for the 2013 VAF Fair Person of the Year Award.