

Despite the on-going threat of the pandemic, the folks with the Pensacola Interstate Fair has expressed great excitement about opening its gates back up for their 85th year from October 22nd to November 1st.

But at what cost?

Because of the pandemic, the fair has put protocols in place to help keep the spreading of the virus at a minimum in which they laud. The protocols include checking everyone's temperature before entering, having a 6-foot distance for queue lines, requiring employees to wear masks, spraying or wiping down the rides with the "long-lasting" germicidal spray KOC-86, and hand sanitizing stations throughout the grounds.

However, some disagree with that sentiment and consider it to actually be a bad idea for the fair to even be hosted this year at all, even with the guidelines that have been put in place.

"Large social gatherings [are] what we want to avoid," says Pensacola State College (PSC) student Pauline Sebuano, "you can't really avoid that at a fair."

The fact that the state of Florida has had over 700k cases has also sounded the alarm for other PSC students like Megan McGuyre. "As it's been shown in the news lately, Florida is, [or was] an epicenter for the virus." Either way she looks at it though, that fact alone is still a cause for concern to her.

Others however say that it's actually good for the morale of the community after how much has happened already, because with the virus people "can't keep their family traditions and get some kind of grasp on normality of life," says PSC student Rachel Rupp. "Going to Walmart or the grocery store you could still get sick, [...] so it's still the same chances and risks you take," she continued.

Even though the fair holds many protocols, there are still things that they are doing in which some students say defeats the whole purpose of the protocols. These things include what the fair has called a

“Face Covering Relaxation Zone”—a tent in which attendees can sit down and take their mask off under—and only suggesting that attendees wear masks and socially distance.

“Part of the thing with covid is [that] it’s even worse in a confined space [...] especially since people who are prone to going to those tents are going to be the ones following the least amount of precautions,” McGuyre said.

Sebuano suggests that they should get rid of the mask tent all together and implement a limit on tickets sold per day if possible.

Along with the Face Covering Relaxation Zone, McGuyre also expressed her concerns not on the guidelines, but on the attendees who have to follow them. “Even if there are the greatest guidelines possible, there are rules that people still won’t follow.” “People don’t care [or] feel concerned whenever they’re having that kind of fun,” she said.

To help better manage the guidelines and protocols, the safety video on the fair’s website claims how they have and will train their employees with a one hour course. Sebuano and McGuyre though both agree that it isn’t enough time to teach employees how to properly handle everything.

McGuyre and Sebuano also both conclude that even though employees may be trained to follow the protocols, some could be very negligent about it and completely ignore them for the most part.

The Fair is back in town for its 85th year, and it’s been welcomed by the pandemic this time around, which has unfortunately un-fairly changed one of the big events the citizens of Pensacola have come to know and love.