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# The show must go on: 56th North Stonington Agricultural Fair opens despite storm



Fairgoers ride the Roundup on Thursday, July 8, 2021, the opening day of the North Stonington Agricultural Fair. (Sean D. Elliot/The Day)

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**Melina Khan, Special to The Day**

North Stonington — From contracting vendors to guaranteeing live entertainment, the North Stonington Agricultural Fair staff is in planning mode year-round. The one thing they couldn't plan for this year, though, was Mother Nature.

The annual four-day fair kicked off Thursday night with attractions like tractor pulling, fair princess and queen contests, a performance by local rock band Alter Ego and, of course, amusement rides.

With Tropical Storm Elsa forecast to hit (<https://www.theday.com/local-news/20210708/tropical-storm-elsa-headed-our-way>) southeastern Connecticut on Friday, fair officials said they would be continuously checking weather reports through the weekend to be prepared to take any necessary safety precautions.

Jodi Whipple, the fair's vice president, said Thursday she remained hopeful that the storm will have little impact on the fair's operation. "If a bad storm was to come through ... we have a place to shelter, but we don't anticipate that happening here," Whipple said.

The other potential impact of the storm is on fair attendance, she said. Patrons come from all over Connecticut, Rhode Island and parts of Massachusetts to attend the fair.

"If it's storming in northwestern Connecticut, they're not gonna make the drive here even though it may not be storming in North Stonington," Whipple said. "Most definitely, the weather plays a big part in our attendance."

Jeanne Paradiso and her 6-year-old son Jack of Johnston, R.I., traveled to North Stonington armed with rain jackets ready to brave the weather. "We were committed to coming unless it was lightning and thunder and downpouring," she said.

Paradiso and her son enjoyed many of the fair's offerings Thursday night, including feeding goats and devouring gyros. As first-time attendees, she said she initially heard about the fair through Facebook.

Other patrons were attracted to the fair because of its local reputation.

"Everyone in town talks about it. It's the thing to do," said Britt Tella, who attended Thursday with husband Joe and son Kade.

The Tellas moved to North Stonington last year and said they've been looking forward to attending the fair ever since. Last year's fair was canceled due to the COVID-19 pandemic, but this year the intermittent weather was not going to deter the family.

"We've been looking forward to coming and checking out the festivities," Joe Tella said. "We tried to prepare (for the weather) the best we could. We brought an umbrella (and) rainboots, but definitely if it started pouring earlier, we weren't gonna make it."

Light rain did not dissuade people from enjoying all the offerings Thursday night.

"I had a lot of fun on the spaceship ride, the one that spins," said Joshua Decamp of Stonington.

Decamp attended with mom Nikki Chenard and sisters Brooke Morin and Julia Chenard. Nikki Chenard frequented the fair as a child and when her own children were young, but they had not gone in several years. With COVID-19 ebbing, the family decided to attend this year.

"Just being out, having fun," Nikki Chenard said of the decision to attend. "They had a special for the rides, so that was awesome for the kids."

The only complaint?

"It wasn't supposed to rain," Brooke Morin said before mom Nikki Chenard inserted, "Either way, we were coming."

**Editor's Note:** This version corrects the spelling of the last name of Nikki and Julia Chenard.



Will Camacho, 12, of Exeter, R.I., examines the work of his brother Michael, 17, cleaning up his red and white Holstein Jada on Thursday, July 8, 2021, the opening day of the North Stonington Agricultural Fair. (Sean D. Elliot/The Day)

## If you go

The fair is open on the following days and hours:

- Thursday and Friday, 5 to 11 p.m.
- Saturday, 8 a.m. to 11 p.m.
- Sunday, 8 a.m. to 6 p.m.

For additional details, visit [northstoningtonfair.org](https://northstoningtonfair.org) (<https://northstoningtonfair.org>).

For a gallery of additional photos from the opening day of the fair, [click here](https://www.theday.com/photo-gallery/20210708/rain-does-not-dampen-spirits-on-first-day-of-north-stonington-fair) (<https://www.theday.com/photo-gallery/20210708/rain-does-not-dampen-spirits-on-first-day-of-north-stonington-fair>).

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As heavy rain fell during the late afternoon and evening, Ledyard voters Tuesday approved a \$6.725 million bond to replace leaking roofs at the Juliet W. Long and Gales Ferry Elementary Schools.



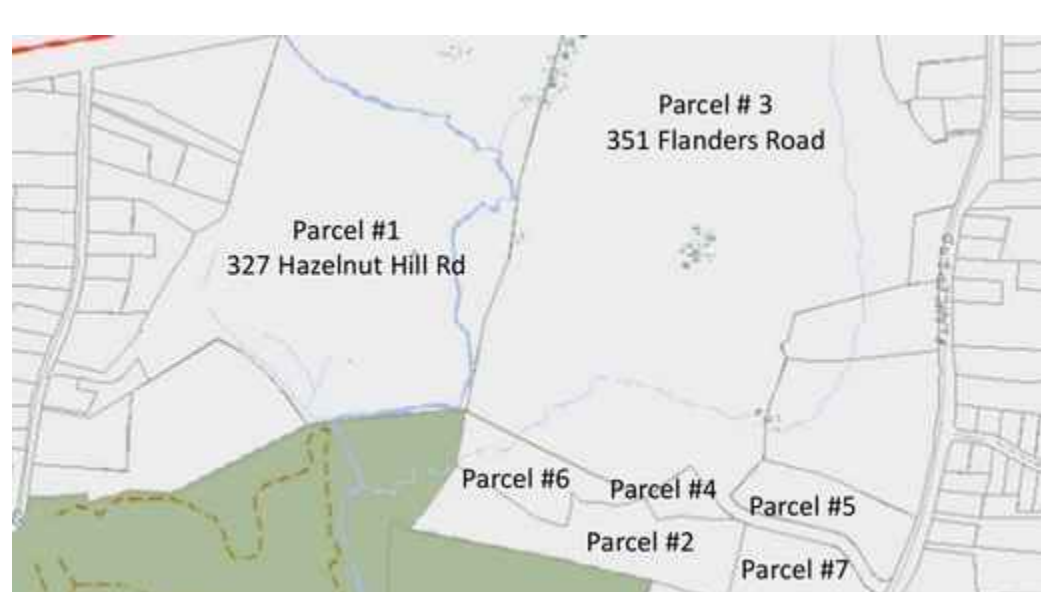
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This is the third of a three-part series.



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A proposed data center agreement for land south of Interstate 95 between Hazelnut Hill and Flanders Roads will be presented to the public on Thursday.