

COUNTRY CONNECTION

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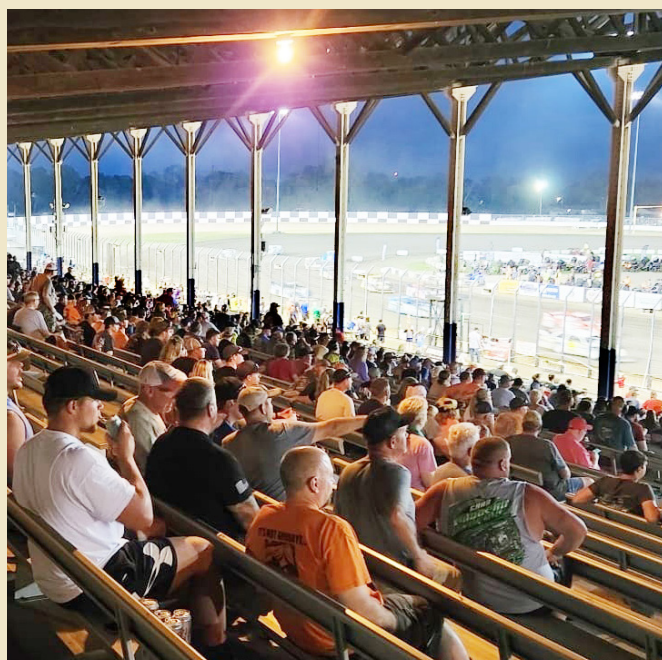


Driver Jeff Struck takes the wheel of Iowa's oldest track

Davenport Speedway stoked for 105th racing season



Struck grades track banking in preparation for the season.



Full 2024 schedule. PAGE 7B



Joe Zrostlik, of Long Grove, competes in 2023. He's back this year for a thrill he can't resist. PAGE 7B

COUNTRY CONNECTION



Drivers hit the dirt April 12 for a season full of surprises

Look at the dirt. If it's compact, rich and clumps well, expect side-by-side fender rubbing, but not so much one-lane dump and runs.

Look at the grading. Enough banking to create a sticky high line; flat enough for opportunities to dive inside.

Look at the front straight, lengthened and flattened to get away from the bull ring that Davenport Speedway's quarter-mile track could become.

New race promoter Jeff Struck spent days reconfiguring the track that opens its 105th season April 12. Struck brings his racing eye, and a fan's heart to the Mississippi Valley Fairgrounds track.

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Jeff Struck picks rocks from new dirt on the Davenport Speedway quarter-mile track.

NSP story and photos by Mark Ridolfi

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Tony Vondresky competes, and crafts engines for race teams here and across the country from his McCausland shop. He prefers orange valve covers, but makes them in all colors.

Creating a family atmosphere

Continued from page 2B

He's aiming for tighter competition, more cars and a family atmosphere that keeps fans coming back week after week.

That's what put him and co-worker Jeff Peterson on the track most weekends this winter moving dirt, and prepping the surface for a new season.

Struck compulsively scoops up rocks, and crumbles clods as he walks the front stretch during one Saturday work day.

He knows how to drive, having won in Outlaw and IMCA stock cars. He knows business, having operated Jeff's Auto Sales and towing in west Davenport for years.

And he's had opinions about promoters in the past. So when fairgrounds director Shawn Loter was looking for a new promoter, Struck bit.

"I didn't want to be the guy who

passed this chance up," he said. "Like racing, when the dust settles, it'll come with losses and wins."

The preseason dust has settled and now it's time for dirt to fly.

The Speedway has 18 Fridays and two, late season Saturdays scheduled with family-fun events to capture kids' attention.

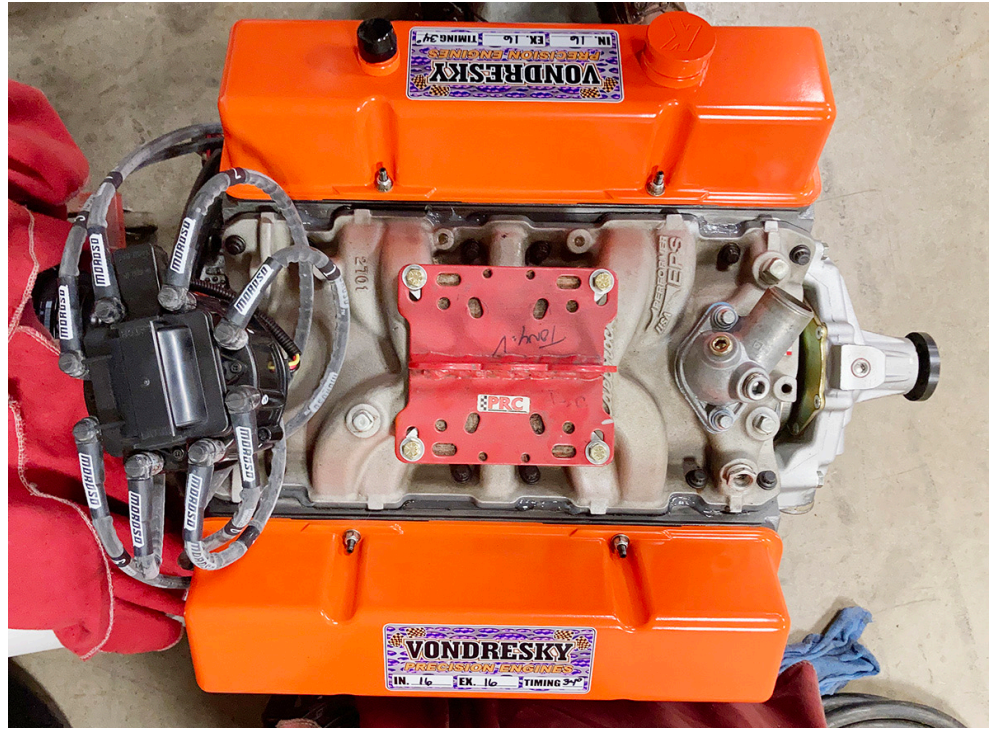
His No. 1 goal as he looks out through the grandstands: Get phones out of kids' hands.

He's convinced that Friday nights at the tracks will captivate families for a few hours, get them cheering in the moment, then coming back.

"It's not a thrill you sit back and watch. It's something you experience," he said.

Engine maker craves competition

Tony Vondresky has experienced it



Continued on page 4B

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Track photographer Brad Foster.

High speed photographer

Brad Foster created Full Throttle Photography to capture the excitement he feels at the race track. Foster said he looks for crisp images that show motion on the track, and emotion in the pits and victory circle. This shot from 2023 shows Tony Vondresky competing in 2023, and posing this year for his driver portrait. Find his images at Brad Foster Photography on Facebook.

“It’s been a big momentum track. It’s kind of a hard thing to figure out if you’re not racing 60 nights a year.” **Tony Vondresky**

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Continued from page 3B

for 23 years. He races, and builds custom engines with his trademark orange valve covers. He works full-time as an auto dealer technician, then spends most nights, 6-10 p.m. making engines in his McCausland shop.

He eyed an old, Chevy engine block that’s the start of his next project. “I already see things I don’t like,” he said, pointing to a hint of rust in a cylinder, and an obvious repair fill.

His own 2024 modified was parked nearby and looked ready to run. But he said it’s still a hundred details away from perfection.

“I’m trying to focus on my own racing now,” he said. He’s aiming for weekly bouts at Davenport, and perhaps East Moline and Maquoketa.

He’s rooting for Struck, and the changes coming at Davenport Speedway.

“It’s been a big momentum track,”

Continued on page 5B

RACING RULES

Davenport Speedway and all area tracks operate under the International Motor Contest Association rules that govern equipment, team conduct, season scoring, and penalties. F

The top series use the same GM crate engine with seals to prevent tampering of piston and valve sizes. Rules include penalties for sabotage.

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Jake Morris, Jeff Morris, John Neilson and Mitch Morris pose in their McCausland shop. They share more than 100 years of racing experience among them.

DAD'S ADVICE:

'You'll spend too much money and it'll burn your whole summer'

Continued from page 4B

he said, that rewards consistency, but limits passing opportunities. "It's kind of a hard thing to figure out if you're not racing 60 nights a year."

He's hopeful Struck's reconfiguration of the quarter-mile will improve competition. "More than one lane will make an exciting race," he said.

Racing binds Morris family

Jeff Morris, of McCausland, has experienced the Speedway for 40 years. He recalls being a kid, hanging outside John Neilson's Eldridge garage. "I'd walk up every night to see if they were working on race cars," he said.

Neilson competed on the race circuit as a driver, then began building his own cars. Morris said he was first a fan, then friend. When Neilson asked him to drive in 1990, "I said hell yes." That was the foundation of a friendship that continues. Neilson still pitches in every week at the track, and almost every day at the Morris' McCausland shop.

That's where Mitch and Jake Morris carry on their dad's passion. Or obsession.

Jeff said he warned all his kids about the perils of racing. Neither have forgotten.

"You remember what you told me?" Jake recalled. "You said you don't want to do this. You'll be addicted and spend too much money and it'll burn your

whole summer."

Oldest son, Matt, apparently heeded the warning. He doesn't race. He and his family cheer at the track on race days. And Matt wrenches many nights in the family garage.

But neither Jake, nor older brother, Mitch, flinched at their dad's warning. "And Jake is always broke," their dad said.

The expenses stagger old-timers like Jeff Morris and John Neilson. In the day, they made everything themselves. Neilson crafted engines and chassis with junkyard parts.

Now most classes race with a standard 604 Crate Engine, that has 350 cubic inch displacement, producing about 400 horsepower. Those run upwards of \$7,500.

Jeff Morris said the engines are super reliable, and level the racing field for better competition.

Continued on page 6B



Jake Morris trims sheet metal to make a rear wing.



Mitch Morris shows where he grooves and sipes tires between treads to improve grip.



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COUNTRY CONNECTION



This photo in the Morrises garage shows John Neilson, left, at Davenport Speedway. The car was sponsored by his family business, still operated by his nephew as LeClaire Auto Service.



Jake and Mitch Morris put the hood on Mitch's car.

Continued from page 5B

Teams choose suspension, braking and tire options to be more competitive. Lots of hands-on work remains.

Like all teams, the Morrises groove and sipe each tire dozens of times, making inch-long grooves between tread lines to add grip.

They form body panels by cutting and bending four-by-eight foot, steel sheets milled to 40/1000ths of an inch. They swap out gears for best performance at each track.

And they wash off dirt constantly. "It's all about building a better mousetrap than the other guy," Jeff said.

The other main advantage comes from hours behind the wheel.

Living in McCausland puts them 30 minutes from three tracks: Davenport, Maquoketa and East Moline. That's three racing nights most weeks.

Mitch said brother Jake, "wrecks more than I do."

"I do," Jake replied. "But he's six years older, more experienced."

Mitch's experience includes a concussion in 2007 at the East Moline speedway. He slid and got t-boned. The EMTs found him unconscious. His dad was leading that race.

"I came around the next corner and the back stretch looked like Daytona, just strewn with cars and parts. But I didn't see his car," Jeff remembered. "It turns out there was no car left."

These days, they sometimes run against full-time drivers who compete five or six nights a week at tracks across the country.

Their friend, John Neilson, recalled his days on the road and says the experience is invaluable.

"Every track is different. Even the same tracks change. It's intense, focused concentration," he said.

That concentration draws Joe Zrostlik to the sport.

Continued on page 7B



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IOWA'S FIRST NASCAR RACE AT THE DAVENPORT SPEEDWAY

NASCAR returns to Iowa this year with racing at the Iowa Speedway in Newton.

The late **Phil Roberts** recalled attending Iowa's first NASCAR race, Aug. 2, 1953, at the Davenport Speedway.

Roberts was four. He later would be an announcer at Davenport Speedway, and work for NASCAR, publicizing races.

Roberts recounted his childhood memories of Iowa's first NASCAR race in a March 17, 1999, NSP column.

"The 200-lap, 100-mile event Dad and I witnessed on the Davenport half-mile dirt track was the series' 25th race of 1953. It included some drivers who would later become quite famous.

"Herb Thomas won the race in a 1953 Hudson, followed by Buck Baker in a '53 Olds, Lee Petty in a '53 Dodge, Dick Rathmann in a '53 Hudson and Fonty Flock in a '53 Hudson.

"I had an opportunity to meet Thomas,

now an elderly man, in Daytona Beach in February of 1998. He was there to be recognized during NASCAR's 50th anniversary celebration as one its 50 greatest drivers.

"Thomas told me he still remembers that race in Davenport in 1953, although he incorrectly recalled that Rathmann, not Baker, had taken second place.

"The remaining drivers in that Davenport event, the ones who finished sixth through 14th, respectively, were: Bill Harrison ('53 Hudson), Mel Krueger ('49 Ford), Johnny Beauchamp ('52 Hudson), Tubby Harrison ('49 Plymouth), Keith Lucas ('52 Studebaker), Ernie Derr ('53 Olds), Jerry Draper ('50 Ford), Paul Newkirk ('51 Nash) and Red Untiedt ('53 Olds).

"If you're a racing fan, you'll recognize some of those names as those of local competitors who wanted to try their luck against the big boys. Since only 14 cars showed up, everyone got to race."

Muscatine fairgrounds host just one race this year

The roaring sounds of the Muscatine County Fairgrounds speedway will be a lot quieter this year as fair director Kelsey Meyers reports there will only be one speedway race this season.

Compared to having eight auto races a year ago, this year's feature attraction for race fans will come with the opening day of the Muscatine County Fair on Wednesday, July 17, in West Liberty.

Meyers reported that last year's promoter, Bud Kile of Kile Motor Sports, retired last year and was not replaced, so races that once were the highlight of a fast-paced Saturday night in West Liberty or Maquoketa will no longer happen, although it hasn't been official that Maquoketa will not hold races.

Meyers says the half-mile dirt

oval in West Liberty is nostalgic, but she hasn't been able to attract a new promoter for the 2024 season, although Darkside Promotions of Southeast Iowa will be helping the fair board with the one race this season, which will feature a number of classes.

"We're known for our half mile track," said Meyers, hoping to attract other races and a full schedule in the future. Kile had been hosting races on the fairgrounds track since 2022.

The races were a prime tourist attraction to West Liberty, bringing hundreds of speedway enthusiasts to town.

Meyers said the fair, slated for July 17-21, will also host a demolition derby for crash enthusiasts as well as the always popular "trailer races," where vehicles race around a figure eight with trailers, hoping to avoid crashes.

By Tim Evans, Advocate News

COUNTRY CONNECTION



The quarter-mile track within the half-miler is being lengthened for a longer front straight, more wedge-banking, and less of a bowl.

Contributed photo

Continued from page 6B

He was in his 40s when he watched a friend race. “I bit on that hook and it’s been 21 years,” he said.

The Long Grove business owner counts himself as lucky. “I found it later in life, so it didn’t consume my time, all my money and energy when I was developing my career,” he said.

“The best part about racing for me is when I’m in a race, in a moment, where it pops in my head, I’m grabbing the wheel, and I’m thinking I’m the luckiest guy in the world right now, doing something I really love, having fun in a race car, and nothing else matters.

“You can’t bottle, quantify or sell this feeling. It’s just that feeling of satisfaction.”

Zrostlik wasn’t the only racer to describe it as a drug.

“It’s very euphoric when you get in the moment of racing. You don’t think of anything else. Your worries, family problems, challenges in the world. It all goes out the window. You are entirely focused on the moment,” he said. “About this time of year, it starts popping up in my head.”

Those racing visions get keener each lap on the track.

“When you drive, you should be driving a second or two in front of where you’re at, but also be aware of what is immediately around you. Some racers have it. They’re naturals. Some have to acquire it through experience and maturity. Some people never get it.

“I like to think I’m on the experienced side. I’m an older racer. I’m not a natural.”

Zrostlik is eager to learn the new Davenport Speedway surface and ex-

perience the straighter front straight. Past racing rounded the quarter mile, putting a permanent curve in the front straight and moving a lot of action into the second and third turns, away from fans.

This year, promoter Struck plans to groom the track for more side-by-side racing in front of fans. He’s also adding a ramp to the grandstand stage so winners can celebrate in a victory lane up high, in full view of fans.

Look for a schedule of themed race days: Mother’s Day; Father’s Day, July 4 fireworks, and other promotions.

Sponsor Jim Groves, of Iowa-Illinois Taylor Insulation is sponsoring a \$10,000 season points fund to pay cash prizes to class winners at the end of the summer.

Struck is hoping the changes will fill the fairgrounds’ massive grandstand, which has easily accommodated the 1,000 or so who come each Friday.

Announcer Shane Davis is back for another season, and all drivers say his knowledge and experience as a former driver add to the excitement of race night.

A century of traditions comes with rivalries among familiar drivers who are returning to the speedway. With so many local racers, Vondresky and Jeff Morris said those on track rivalries are another Davenport Speedway distinction.

“There are only a few guys I can hold grudges against. Most of them, I’m buying them a beer after the race,” Morris said.

“Even the ones you have tussles with on the track; you tussle one week, and they loan you a part the next week,” Vondresky said.

DAVENPORT SPEEDWAY 2024 SCHEDULE

- April 12: Koehler Electric Season Opener. a discount.
- April 19: Hot Rod Night at the Races. Bring your hot rod for discounted general admission.
- April 26: Throwback concessions night. Discounts on food, cheap combo meal.
- May 3: Taco Night, Cinco de Mayo weekend.
- May 10: Mother’s Day. Mom gets a discount.
- May 17: Law Enforcement Appreciation Night.
- May 24: Scott County Cattleman’s Night, with the Malvern Bank SLMR Models.
- May 31: Throwback Concessions Night.
- June 7: Family Fun Day, with inflatables and kids activities.
- June 14: Father’s Day Weekend. Dad gets a discount.
- June 21: Ice Cream Night, with the west Davenport Sweet Delite ice cream truck.
- June 28: Throwback Concessions Night.
- July 5: Fireworks Night.
- July 12: Christmas in July, with outfit contests and light displays.
- July 19: Are you ready for the fair? Funnel cakes and corn dogs.
- Aug. 9: Halloween celebration.
- Aug. 23: Season championship, and checkered flag giveaway.
- Sept. 6: Glow stick night, and Night of Destruction, featuring MJ and nostalgia late models, as well as other classes.
- Sept. 13 & 14: Corn State nationals, Lucas Oil MLRA.
- Sept. 27 & 28: Davenport Dirt Stars.



From driver to promoter

Inside IMCA Racing magazine featured Struck in its March 20 edition.

“IMCA brings more thrilling racing more consistently. I believe we’ll see that in the new Hobby Stock division as more people get cars built. It’s a competitive class and it’s economical.”

Struck is putting final touches on the 2024 schedule and will announce dates of events paying Modifieds and Northern SportMods \$1,000 to win. The Sunoco Race Fuels Bonus Night for Late Models is Aug. 9.

“I grew up going to races with my dad and racing was something I always wanted to do myself,” said Struck, who drove a tow truck at Davenport before he was old enough to get his driver’s license. “I ran in the open street stock class here, then in an IMCA Stock Car and IMCA Modified and was too competitive for as smart as I was.”

“Promoting was another thing I have always wanted to do,” he continued. “When this opportunity came up, I was in position to hold my hand up.”

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COUNTRY CONNECTION

Keep your crops close, and your corn closer

A shift to narrow corn rows is significantly impacting farming

By Jacob Lane

Editor West Liberty Index and Advocate News

In the heartland of America, where vast fields of corn stretch to the horizon, a subtle but significant shift has taken place.

If you've grown up in Iowa, you may have noticed it. Running between rows of corn is a lot harder now because they're a lot closer together.

"It's just the changing of the times," says Adam Heitman, Manager of Liqui-Grow in West Liberty, which has been in the ag industry for six decades and two generations.

Liqui-Grow specializes in liquid fertilizers by providing farmers with the right fertilizer, at the right rate, in the right place, at the right time.

"Research shows that 30-inch rows are better than the 36 or 38 inches that they used to be," he says. "You get more plants per acre when you narrow the rows, so your yield goes up."

Many farmers are always looking to up that yield, even if that means departing from traditional practices, though it has sparked some debate about the benefits.

However, the shift has been driven by a combination of technological advancements, agronomic research, and economic considerations.

"When you have narrow corn rows, it also helps with weed control," says Heitman, "Because then you have more shading to stop them from growing."

Back in the day, the spacing between corn rows was determined by the width needed for farm animals to pull equipment between them, including horses and oxen.

However, tractors have replaced animal power, so researchers began to explore the potential advantages of narrower row spacing.

Studies conducted in the 1960s and 1970s indicated that switching from 40-inch to 30-inch rows could result in yield increases of 5 to 7 percent.

Decades of subsequent research have further shown the positive impact of row spacing on corn yield and productivity.

To dig into the details, one reason for narrow row spacing is the belief that closer spacing within the row reduces competition among plants for water, nutrients, and light.

This theory is supported by the fact that narrow rows have consistently increased yield potential, particularly in environments with limited moisture or other yield-limiting factors.

However, the transition to narrow row spacing is not without its challenges.

Compaction, which is caused by heavy



North Scott FFA students plant in 2021.

NSP file photo

farm equipment repeatedly treading the same ground, is a concern, as it can negatively impact the soil and inhibit root growth.

Farmers must be careful to manage wheel traffic to minimize compaction and preserve potential yield gains from narrower rows.

Next, the adoption of narrow row spacing brings up new cost considerations.

Farmers must invest in new equipment capable of planting and harvesting in narrower rows, which can result in a substantial upfront cost.

Studies have suggested that a yield advantage of 6 to 8 percent over 7 to 10 years may be necessary to recoup these expenses on larger acreages.

Despite these challenges, many farmers are still drawn to narrow row spacing by the promise of increased yield potential and improved weed control.

In fact, the ability to use the same equipment for both corn and soybean crops, as well as reduce deer damage due to less space, further incentivizes the transition.

"The most common row spacing for corn across the Corn Belt is 30-inches," states Iowa State University Extension and Outreach writing on integrated crop management.

"This is compared to 36- and 38-inch row spacing dating back to the 1960s. Over the last decade, there has been increasing interest in 20-inch row spacing," it states.

Research by Iowa State University has examined the effects of 20-inch and 30-inch row spacing on corn yields and found that it varied from location to location and from year to year.

They state that farmers should consider row spacing based on field productivity.

In high yielding environments, greater than 235 bushels per acre, yield increased 8-10 bushels per acre when planted in 20-inch rows compared to 30-inch.

However, in environments with less than 180 bushels per acre, both 20- and 30-inch spacing had similar yields.

There are a few other variables as well according to a May, 2022, article entitled "Corn Yield Potential and Row Spacing," by the Crop Science wing of Bayer and Bayer.

Shorter, earlier-maturing corn varieties with few or narrow leaves have been shown to respond positively to narrow rows and higher plant populations.

In contrast, taller, later-maturing varieties may be better suited to wider row spacing.

"Stalk breakage or standability is a concern for some farmers with increases in population," is states.

"However, corn products can be selected for end of season standability and stalk strength to help mitigate these concerns. Typically, new corn products can withstand the higher plant density."

In the end, it looks like the shift to narrow rows is here to stay. It's a significant departure from the America of the 1960s, but farming is an evolving science.

The shift represents a significant evolution in corn planting practices, the benefits of narrow rows in terms of yield potential and weed control are clear.

However, farmers must carefully weigh the associated costs and challenges before making the transition.

"Potential yield increases due to narrow row spacing are higher and more consistent in the Northern Corn Belt," states Bayer and Bayer.

"Farmers should recognize the potential year-to-year variability of yield response to narrow rows in the Central Corn Belt and Southern regions."

Information from this article was taken from Bayer and Bayer Crop Sciences found at crops.cscience.bayer.us, and ISU Extension and Outreach at crops.extension.iastate.edu

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COUNTRY CONNECTION

IOWA PORK PRODUCERS

Japanese-American fusion tops Iowa student pork cook-off

The classic American meal of meat, potatoes, and vegetables was fused with Japanese ingredients to win over judges at this year's student Taste competition, hosted March 4, by the Iowa Pork Producers Association.

For the annual contest, culinary students were challenged to create their tastiest entrée utilizing boneless pork loin. Eight teams from four Iowa colleges and universities had two hours in the kitchen to prepare their recipes.

"Definitely the goal is to expose students to different types of pork cuts, maybe cuts they didn't grow up eating, so that they hopefully keep it top of mind as they go into their future careers," said Kelsey Sutter, IPPA's marketing and programs director.

Teams consisted of two to four students, and their entrées were judged on taste, appearance, complementing side dishes, and design. The event took place at the Iowa Culinary Institute on the Des Moines Area Community College (DMACC) campus in Ankeny.

The first-place team from Iowa State University (ISU) in Ames was Culinary "Cy"entist, a play on ISU's Cy the Cardinal mascot. Members included senior Christabel Forney, Ames; senior Evelyn Greenbury, Arlington Heights, Ill.; junior Izabele Jaime, Mason City; and senior Julain Sinkler from Queens, New York.

Slices of pork glazed with red wine and miso were served alongside shaved brussels sprouts seasoned with togarashi (chili pepper), and potato mochi, a potato patty with a crispy shell, chewy center, and sweet and savory sauce.

"The pork was cooked excellent with slight pink presentation," said judge Tanner Killinger, with Des Moines Embassy Club, referring to recommendations to cook whole-muscle pork cuts to 145 degrees for maximum flavor and juiciness. Killinger won second place, or Superior Chef, during the Taste event for professional chefs in Des Moines in January.

Other judges noted "pork tenderness is perfect," and that the concept was "very creative and new."

Each member of the winning team

was awarded \$100 from IPPA. In addition, ISU's culinary food science program received \$750 for scholarships or educational supplies.

Runners up

Judges selected **Spice Girls 2.0**, from Iowa Western Community College in Council Bluffs, for second place. The team's Mexican-themed carnitas torta featured citrus-marinated pork from Gettler Farms in Red Oak.

Thinly cut strips of pork were positioned on pan telera (Mexican bread), with toppings like lettuce, tomato, and guacamole. Accompanying the sandwich were frijoles puercos, a mixture of pinto beans and chorizo; Spanish rice; and elote salad, also known as grilled Mexican street corn with mayonnaise, cotija cheese, and Tahin chili powder.

Second-year students Alayna Chapman, Polo, Mo.; Evelyn Martinez, Council Bluffs; and Yazmyn Sánchez, Omaha, Neb.; along with first-year student Hailey Wright, Glenwood, each won \$50 from IPPA. Their school received an additional \$500.

Third place went to **Hog Honchos**, made up of Lee DeLoach Jr., Marion; Connor Echternacht, Tiffin; and Christian Snyder, Burlington. All are first-year students attending Kirkwood Community College in Cedar Rapids.

The trio prepared pan-roasted Duroc pork loin over a pork consommé, a clear soup made with concentrated stock. The complete plate featured cilantro-peanut dumplings, sauteed bok choy, wakame (seaweed) salad, and sake-soy glaze. They received \$25 each and \$250 for Kirkwood.

"Pork has it all — whether you're wanting something with rich, deep flavors, or a healthy, lean protein," IPPA's Sutter said. "Pork loin is very versatile and a cut that can take on any flavor profile, and that is on full display here when you look at all of the plates."

The competition is open to any Iowa college or university with a culinary arts program. IPPA provides each school with \$500 for food and contest expenses, and reimburses them for mileage.



The first-place team from Iowa State University (ISU) in Ames was Culinary "Cy"entist, a play on ISU's Cy the Cardinal mascot. Members included senior Christabel Forney, Ames; senior Evelyn Greenbury, Arlington Heights, Ill.; junior Izabele Jaime, Mason City; and senior Julain Sinkler from Queens, a borough of the city of New York. Contributed photo



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COUNTRY CONNECTION

Continued from page 10B

town.

The stand is expected to be open the first week in April and should run through late September or early October, hoping to be able to provide pumpkins and squash as well this year.

She said creating the stand, which her husband built, was really one of the only options as they were looking for a location and asked for suggestions via social media.

Rise and Grind owners Halle Hansell and sister Hattie Gillaspie stepped up to offer space on their corner, taking produce in exchange for rent. "Halle and her sister Hattie have been wonderful landlords," Kendall said, noting they even donated seeds for the garden from their grandmother.

Kendall said participating in the Durant Farmer's Market wasn't an option because Finley has dance lessons most Wednesdays and said the opportunity to open a stand was even more promising after the Paulsen family ended their streak of produce markets in the community.

There are mornings and days Finley, who is home schooled via Durant, gets upset with "work" but Kendall says "she overcomes it quickly especially when she goes to fill her stand and talks with community members who thank her and tell her how much they appreciate her hard work."

Another motivation is the fact mom lets Finley keep one-fourth of the income from the stand for herself while the remainder goes into a savings account for her future. This year, she even has an additional incentive – saving enough for a trip to Disney for her eighth birthday.

But that money is only hers after covering expenses, which includes baking pans, ingredients, seeds and other supplies used both in gardening and baking.

Kendall said she's learned a lot about business, getting entrepreneurial tips from her dad, who has his own pole building business, J.P. Builders. She learned a lot of her gardening skills through Kendall's stepmother, Krissy Veach of Wapello.

Finley says she eventually wants to be an engineer and hopes to "have a homestead with a garden, fruit trees and lots and lots of animals, especially goats."

The Durants say they're grateful to Finley's grandparents, Larry and Janet Schlapkohl, for letting them plant the 20 x 30-foot garden on the property where they've lived since Finley was a baby. She said the young family never could eat everything grown in the garden, which is one of the reasons Finley came up with the solution – to donate the produce to those who do need it. "She just wanted to help others," Kendall said.

Grandma Janet has also taught Finley how to bake, instrumental in helping create loaves of breads and cookies for the stand. Finley says she loves making mini loaves of zucchini bread and baking cookies and admits her favorite is the zucchini bread.

The rural homestead also has a couple of apple trees, which are not only sold at the stand, but also used in baking, mostly picked by Finley.

The stand is filled about three times a day during the prime season and mom said the only setback came when a group of local kids decided they'd ransack the stand as a joke last summer. It didn't take long before the community rallied, capturing the culprits and even refilling the stand with some of their own produce. Kendall says the "naughty boys" made things right with Finley and donations of produce and even a \$100 donation from a local man aided the setback.

Kendall said there are other gardeners in the community that now contribute to the stand with their excess produce. "We've had a lot of people help Finley along the way," the mom said.

Kendall said the family of three came up with the name Finny's Farm because that's Finley's nickname, but also thought their farm, which also raises goats, ducks, turkeys, chickens and pigs, is a "funny farm."

Finley says her friends "think it's cool" what she's accomplished and Kendall says Finley plans to keep the stand alive until she gets tired of it, but noted, "I don't see her stopping anytime soon."



Finley tracks expenses, covers them, then banks the rest for college, with a little set aside for an eighth birthday Disney trip.

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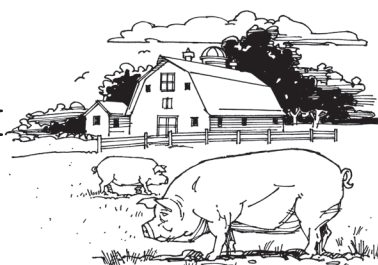
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