

May 5, 2020

Dear Clark County 4-H Community,

It is with deep emotion that I send you this announcement from the Clark County Fair Manager:
"While we were hopeful that we would be able to move forward with the 2020 Clark County Fair, based on the information we have received from the Department of Health and Governor Inslee's May 1st Safe Start Washington guidelines regarding COVID-19, the Fair Board Executive Committee has made the decision to cancel the 2020 Fair. Our priority has always been to ensure a safe experience for our guests, employees, entertainers, exhibitors and sponsors, and we don't feel we would be able to effectively institute safety and health protocols to maintain the physical distancing requirements as mandated to inhibit the spread of COVID-19. Additionally, the timing of Washington's Phased Approach to Reopening puts the end of Phase 4 within days of the Clark County Fair opening day. Any delays or extensions of the phases could place the Fair in a situation where gathering size limits could be unrealistic in terms of the crowds we anticipate attracting. A late extension of restrictions would also have the possibility that a significant amount of money had been expended or committed that could not be recovered. Some of that would be funds from deposits and prepayments that would need to be refunded."

There is little I can say that will bring comfort. We were hopeful and optimistic that the Fair would go on and it is heart breaking for all of us. I have enjoyed watching our 4-H community stay connected virtually. The Facebook pages of 4-H leaders offering curbside 4-H project pickups and Facetime live videos of 4-H members demonstrating their animal project have warmed my heart. It is the strong sense of community that is at the heart of moving forward after this challenge. I am encouraged by the conversations I have had with volunteers and 4-H programs across the state and the country who have found creative ways to showcase 4-H members' involvement in ways that support the life skill development, the safety, and acknowledge the achievements of our youth. We are a powerful team and I have no doubt we will rally together and come up with something amazing. Plans for moving forward with a 4-H Showcase will be on the agenda for our Leaders Association quarterly, May 19.

I am grateful for the Clark County Fair Manager and the Fair Board for their continued support and dedication to agricultural education for our youth. It is reassuring to know that the Clark County Fair team was quick to respond to protect our community. The safety of the youth, volunteers, and the public was at the forefront of the painful decision. The Fair Manager and I have had regular conversations since Governor Inslee first announced the stay home stay safe order and I am humbled by his leadership and the consideration he has for the impact this decision has on our 4-H youth and families.

Thank you for all of you do for each other and the community. This is a difficult time for everyone and my heart is breaking for all of us. Take a few days to process the announcement and hold the space for the emotions that you and your club members may be feeling. The Fair is important to many of us. Please reach out to me if you would like to talk.

Sincerely,



Missy McElprang Cummins
4-H Regional Specialist