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80’s flashback

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THIRTY YEARS OF EXPO MEMORIES

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THIRTY YEARS OF EXPO MEMORIES
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By William Axford
axford@tcetimes.com; 810-433-6792

Marty McFly hopped into the DeLorean for the first time and the Titanic was found near Newfoundland. MTV played music videos instead of following around teenage mothers and Coke disastrously tried to change its formula. The year was 1985 and the Fenton Regional Chamber held its first ever Community Expo event.

Here’s a look back at the trends and news that shaped the inaugural year of the expo.

The Goonies, The Breakfast Club, Rocky IV and Back to the Future ruled the theaters. Two more Rocky movies would be made, with the latest one in 2006 while Back to the Future saw two more sequels. Other movies from 1985 were Weird Science, Pee-wee’s Big Adventure, Rambo II and Teen Wolf.

Fashion from the ’80s was all about bright and bold colors. It was the era of parachute pants, fingerless gloves and oversized tops. Hairstyles were big too, with women pooling out their hair as much as possible with styling mousse and hairspray. Men had equally unique haircuts ranging from mullets and rat tails to jheri curls and fade tops.

On the music front, 1985 was the year of major stars collaborating in projects like ‘We Are the World’ and ‘Live Aid.’ Madonna held her first tour. Top songs like ‘Money for Nothing,’ ‘Everybody Wants to Rule the World’ and ‘Take On Me’ now rule classic rock and pop stations. Hair metal, synthesizers, Michael Jackson and Cyndi Lauper were other definitive sounds from the ’80s overall. MTV played dozens of music videos while VH1 made its debut, aimed at older audiences.

News events from 1985 included the AIDS epidemic, crisis from American farmers and a push to improve the livelihood of Africans. The Soviet Union switched leadership, leading to waning tensions in the Cold War. President Ronald Reagan was sworn in for his second term. The 49ers won the Superbowl and the Lakers were NBA champions. The Tigers won the World Series in 1984 but weren’t repeat champions the next year. The Kansas City Royals beat the Cardinals in the World Series in ’85.
What’s new at the Expo?

- Whether 1985, or 2014, Expo is always family friendly
  
  By Tim Jagielo
  tjagielo@tctimes.com; 810-433-6795

  Aside from the obvious ‘80s theme, there are a few new highlights for this year’s expo.

  For the 30th anniversary the chamber is giving out anniversary bags to the first 200 visitors on Saturday and Sunday. The bags will have a treat inside. “This is not a plastic bag, it is a fabric shopping bag,” said Fenton Regional Chamber of Commerce Executive Director Shelly Day, with the same ‘80s theme, expo logo and bright, fluorescent colors.

  The number of vendors is on par with the last 10 years — the gym is currently maxed out, and the main hallway is nearly full. “I think the really cool thing is we’ve been doing it for 30 years, we try not to change it up too much, it’s all about the exhibitors showing off what they have for the community,” said Day.

  The Kids Zone is of course a bonus to kids and families. New for 2014 is a sound system, donated by The Stereo Guy. “When the kids’ prizes are drawn they’ll be able to announce them in the kids’ area,” she said, and play music.

  There will be up to four large inflatables, games and “We also have dress-up characters walking around,” said Day. Dora, Diego, Elmo and Mickey, are coming from Valley Tent Rental, brought to life by National Honor Society (NHS) volunteers.

  Down the civic hallway there is the petting zoo from the local 4-H club, and live entertainment in the food court. Day said that all the vendors from last year are returning for 2014.
Thirty years of Expo memories

Area’s longest-running event of its kind remains as popular as ever

By Sally Rummel
news@tctimes.com; 810-629-8282

Bill Cosby was starring in the year’s top-watched TV series “The Bill Cosby Show” and Madonna’s “Like a Virgin” was at the top of the pop charts. “Out of Africa” was the number one movie at the box office and Jane Fonda’s New Workout tape was tops on the chart for leg-warming aerobics-lovers.

The year was 1985 and locally at the IGA store, bread was selling for 69 cents a loaf and tomato soup could be bought at five for $1.

A group of interested business professionals through the Fenton Chamber of Commerce had begun early to plan the debut of the first-ever Fenton Business Expo, set for March 30, 1985.

Organizers included Meredith Reischley, Pat Lockwood, Marcia Nelson, Denny Dunfield, Judy Brant, Sue Turner, Steve Hovey, Linda Hoffman, Jim Karjalainen, Paul Van Gilder and Jerry Brace. Their original goal was to organize a show where businesses could meet the public, exhibit their products and services available within the business community.

See MEMORIES on 11

Remember when?

The biggest hit of the first-ever Fenton Business Expo was the Easter Egg Hunt.

Other highlights were fashion shows, story-telling for kids, clowns, aerobics, Village Players, karate demos, dance demos, demos by Fenton Area Ambulance Service, First Presbyterian Bell Choir, break dancing demos, Dibbleville Dolls — a pop music and folk trio.

Other memories of Expos past:

• Larry Dornas of Fenton won the first Expo’s Grand Prize of a Hitachi AM-FM receiver, turntable and speakers.
• In 1982, when a dance stage almost collapsed and “gallant” local men from the audience ran to the rescue to hold the stage up so the dancers could finish their dance.
• A two-story hair salon designed to hold the stage up so the dancers could finish their dance.

Sharon Miner, of Miner Law Office in Fenton, was an Expo announcer for many years.

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Thirty years ago on March 30-31, 1985, the first Fenton Business Expo was developed and introduced to the community.

A committee consisting of Chamber Director Pat Lockwood and 10 business representatives: Jerry Brace, Sue Turner (Yestis), Meredith Reschley, Judy Brant, Denny Dunfield, Steve Hovey, Marcia Nelson, Linda Hoffmann (Hathaway), Jim Karjalainen and Paul VanGilder organized a show dedicated to businesses in the area showcasing the services and products they have to offer.

Today, the Fenton Community Expo still has the same purpose and mission allowing our members the opportunity to sell and promote their products and services. As we celebrate our 30th show, we would like to recognize the State Bank, Coldwell Banker Professionals, the city of Fenton and Fenton Area Public Schools that have participated in every Expo!

The relationships formed through their sponsorships, employee volunteers, and accessibility has allowed us to enhance the show in countless ways.

The Fenton Regional Chamber of Commerce takes great pride in the many compliments received comparing our Expo to larger venue shows hosted in exhibition centers. The success of the Expo has been attributed to the wide variety of membership that has allowed us to meet our goals and attract all ages.

We invite you all to join us this year at the Expo. Remember, the first 200 on Saturday and Sunday will receive a special anniversary bag and treat!

‘80s Flashback Reunion draws Expo exhibitors

Fenton Hotel plays host to pre-Expo ‘Meet & Greet’

By Sally Rummel
news@tctimes.com, 810-629-8282

The 2014 Expo Exhibitor Orientation & Flashback Reunion on Wednesday, Feb. 19 at the Fenton Hotel Tavern & Grille got everyone in the Expo spirit.

“We decided to have a more diverse selection of exhibitors in the evening as a celebration of our 30th Expo,” said Linda Hathaway, Expo chairman. Typically, the Exhibitor Orientation “Meet & Greet” is held mid-week at 8 a.m. several weeks before the Expo.

“We’ll ask our exhibitors in the critique after the Expo which works out better for them in the future.”

From 6 to 7 p.m., exhibitors learned the “do’s and don’ts” of the Expo experience. “We had over 90 businesses represented,” said Hathaway. “It was well attended. This meeting really helps them know what to expect before, during and after Expo and gets them prepared as a business before Expo weekend.”

Hathaway is also hoping that this annual “pep talk” will encourage businesses to decorate their booths for the ‘80s Flashback Booth Contest during Expo. “The business having a booth with the most votes will earn an Office Lunch valued up to $300 at their choice of a Chamber-member restaurant.”

All the businesses in attendance were able to enter a drawing for a free booth at the 2015 Expo. The winning ticket was drawn at 7 p.m. and the Fenton Lions Club will enjoy a free booth for next year’s Expo.

“We were really excited that the Fenton Lions won the drawing,” said Shelly Day, executive director of the Chamber. “They have been very active participants in the Expo for a number of years with several booths, and they invest a lot in our community.”

After the meeting, a D.J. spun out ‘80s tunes while guests enjoyed a full spread of appetizers presented by the Fenton Hotel. Guests were also able to enjoy browsing at wall collages of Expo past, thanks to Dawn Placek and Rachel Monreal, who assembled the collages this week for the enjoyment of Flashback Reunion visitors.

Free vision and diabetes screening

Local Lions clubs participate in KidSight project

Guests attending this year’s Fenton Community Expo may want to take advantage of free vision and diabetes screening, provided by the Fenton and Linden Lions clubs.

Although in the past, the screening done at the expo was for just kids age 1-5, this year, the Lions clubs have expanded their reach and can conduct vision screening on all ages, with two different screening techniques.

Vision screening for kids 1-5

The Lions’ project, KidSight, will have a booth at the Expo and parents will be able to find out immediately if their child has any issues with six criteria that can be detected with the Lions’ state-of-the-art digital camera.

The Lions use a German-made camera, which they purchased with donations. During the Expo, parents who want their young children screened for vision problems will be asked to fill out a consent form. Using the digital camera, Lions volunteers, many of whom are certified by KidSight, will take a photograph of the child’s eyes as they sit in a chair or on top of their parent’s lap.

The on-site equipment will process the photo and print out the results. If the child is referred from this screening, the parents will be advised to take their child to an ophthalmologist or optometrist in the area. Their doctor will then complete the referral form and return it to the Lions.

Lions volunteers will follow up to make sure the child has been checked by a doctor and they will be updating their nationwide database with statistics. Vision screening for ages 5 and up

In addition to the vision screening for kids 1-5, the Lions clubs will conduct free vision screening for eyes with a machine called “Timitus.” They recently purchased a new one. This machine is for children ages 5-adult.

Diabetes screening

A registered nurse from the Diabetic Foundation of Michigan will be on hand all day, both days, to do screenings for adults at the expo. They do this to help prevent diabetic retinopathy, diabetic blindness, which is not part of the Titmus machine screening.
‘Breath of fresh air’ at Expo

▷ Two sponsors bring a touch of spring to entrance, plus free admission for fifth year

By Sally Rummel
news@ctimes.com; 810-629-8282

Leave winter far behind and take in a “breath of fresh air” when you enter the doors of this year’s Expo at Fenton High School on March 1 and 2.

Major Expo sponsors Coldwell Banker Professionals and Sharp Funeral Homes are celebrating their own milestone year, in addition to the Expo’s 30th Anniversary. This is the duo’s fifth year of Expo sponsorship, which provides free admission into the Expo. Prior to five years ago, admission was $2.

“When the recession took hold about five years ago, we decided that we wanted to find sponsors to offset the price of admission, so that people could still afford to come,” said Shelly Day, executive director for the Fenton Regional Chamber.

In addition to the gift of free admission, Expo visitors this year will notice a touch of spring at the entrance after such a long winter, promises Ken Brant, of Coldwell Banker Professionals. There will be photographs and other signs of spring to provide warmth and comfort to Expo visitors, no matter what the weather.

Brant is also going to interview select homeowners coming through the doors, for a video he is creating about home ownership. “In addition to our event sponsorship, Coldwell Banker Professionals has a double booth this year to provide people with the most current data about the home-buying experience,” he said.

Sharp Funeral Homes also has an inside booth, to provide the public with informational materials and giveaways.

“We’re pleased to provide Expo visitors with free admission,” said Brant. “We’re proud to be two businesses that have been here since the beginning.”

“Their mission is to help make up for such a hard winter.”

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**Win this car or truck!**

*This year’s Car Raffle gives you a choice of winning a convertible Chevrolet SS Camaro or Sierra pickup*

By Sally Rummel
news@tctimes.com; 810-629-8282

You can win a new vehicle, your way, when this year’s Expo on March 1-2 kicks off the 2014 Chamber Car Raffle campaign.

Winners will have their choice of driving home a brand new convertible 2014 SS Camaro or Chevrolet Silverado pickup truck, both from Vic Canever Chevrolet in Fenton. The winner also has their choice of vehicle color.

The Grand Prize will be drawn on Saturday, Aug. 11 at the conclusion of The Taste in Fenton event.

A limited number of 1,000 tickets will be for sale for $100 a piece, beginning Expo weekend. The vehicles will be on display at the north and south entrances of Fenton High School. Throughout the campaign, both vehicles will be on display at area businesses.

Prizes will be given out to the top seller of tickets each month of the campaign, including March, April, May, June and July. “Anyone can sell tickets,” said Shelly Day, executive director. “The more tickets that are out there, the better. To pick up tickets to sell, stop in at the Chamber office after Expo weekend and we’ll assign the tickets. Any unsold tickets need to be returned to the Chamber office.”

The top seller overall will win a $500 cash prize. Last year, the hardworking lucky winner was Matt Stevens. All proceeds from the Car Raffle will go toward the Chamber’s Building Fund. “By buying a ticket, you’re investing in a building and re-investing in a business in Fenton,” said Day.

Last year, a total of 400 tickets were sold in the Car Raffle, resulting in a 50-50 split between the Chamber and a winner, which took home $22,000. In order to give away a car or truck, at least 800 tickets need to be sold.

“We’re going with Vic Canever again this year to give them an opportunity to benefit from all the hard work they put in promoting this event the first year,” said Day. “They were our top ticket sellers, too.”

For more information about the Car Raffle, contact the Chamber office at (810) 629-5447.

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**Summary**

*The second annual Car Raffle will kick-off on Expo weekend, March 1-2. The winner will have a choice between a 2014 convertible Camaro or a Chevrolet Sierra pickup truck. Top ticket sellers will also win prizes.*

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The winner of the 50/50 drawing in 2013 was Marshall Callard. Pictured with the Callards are Keith Green, Shelly Day, Chelsea Mills and Matt Stevens.
“The show must go on” at the Expo, even when the portable stage holding the dancers in this keepsake photo had to be held up by strong, local gentlemen from the audience.

MEMORIES
Continued from Page 5
With Easter falling on April 7 that year, the Expo committee arranged with Fenton schools to use the facilities of Fenton High School while students were on spring break.

This event capped months of planning, and will go down in local history as one of the most successful projects undertaken by the local chamber.

The first Expo featured about 66 booths and drew an enthusiastic crowd of 3,500. “It was fantastic, better than we had ever hoped,” said Denny Dunfield, in the April 3, 1985 recap story published in the Tri-County News. “It was a smashing success. All of it seemed very positive. We heard many comments about it being the best thing the Chamber had ever done.”

Thirty years later, those positive feelings about the Fenton Regional Chamber’s largest annual fundraising event remain unchanged.

“Our goal has always been to showcase local businesses, and we’re as dedicated to that goal in our 30th year as we were back then,” said Linda Hathaway, who has been involved with the Expo since the beginning. She admits, however, that the event has gone through many changes over the years to perfect its timing and reflect the changes of the decades.

“We’ve learned through trial and error,” she said. “We’ve changed the date and time around a bit to accommodate Palm Sunday, Easter and Sunday worship schedules, as well as for businesses that benefit from an earlier date in March. We’re very proud of the good working relationships we have with the schools and the city of Fenton. It’s a great community event.”

Shelly Day, executive director of the Chamber for 21 years, has been involved with the Expo for more than two decades and is amazed at the staying power of this event. “It’s really exciting that we are 30 years old this year,” said Day. “I don’t know of any other event of this type that is still going strong after three decades. Hosting this event year after year is one of our proudest moments as a Chamber. We owe it all to the support of our businesses and the community that supports it.”

Local businesses also praise the strength and power of the Community Expo. “The Fenton Expo is my favorite Chamber event of the year,” said Michael LaJoie, owner of Chasse Ballroom & Latin Dance Studio. “My staff agrees. There’s no better way to showcase to our community what we do as a business.”

This 15th year anniversary photo from the 1999 Expo shows the range of people actively involved in the planning and organization of this annual event, especially during a milestone year.
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TRI-COUNTY TIMES EXPO SECTION
Why go to the Expo?

Get to know your community through the doors of the Expo

By Sally Rummel
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The hallways and gym of Fenton High School are transformed before your eyes when you walk through the doors of the Community Expo the weekend of March 1 and 2. This year’s theme of 30 Years Strong! ‘80s Flashback will fill your senses with the sights and sounds of 30 years ago, with décor, music and booths celebrating the ‘80s theme.

“We’re hoping that all of our exhibitors will ‘dress’ their booths using the ‘80s theme,” said Expo Chairman Linda Hathaway. “The booth with the most votes will win a lunch for the entire staff of their business from the Chamber member restaurant of their choice, up to a $300 value.”

The fun theme of the 1980s and the celebration of 30 years will likely draw a huge crowd to this event. Not only is it a chance for businesses to showcase their products and services, but also for residents of the tri-county community to gather to learn more about the area in which they live.

“It’s more than just about handing out free pens to people who stop at our booth,” said Michael LaJoie, owner of Chasse Ballroom & Latin Dance Studio. “We spend the entire weekend giving away certificates for Zumba Fitness and dance classes. You get to see the services we provide in action at the Expo and get to meet our staff in person. It’s truly a great experience. Every year it is great to see so many families coming out to see what their local businesses have to offer.”

Of course, the fun atmosphere of the Expo is also a huge draw. Musical performances by local landmark groups like The Ambassadors of Fenton High School have become an integral part of the Expo experience. Dance demos, diving demos, the Petting Zoo all enhance the fun for families attending.

Food is another festive part of Expo fun, with participating restaurants serving up favorites in the cafeteria, as well as popular favorites from the Fenton High School food service. You’ll find everything from entrees to snacks and beverages.

“Probably our biggest turning point throughout our years was adding the Kids’ Zone, now sponsored by Valley Tent Rental and Faith City Church,” said Shelly Day, executive director of the Chamber. “We were able to do that when Fenton High School added its auxiliary gym. “The kids can enjoy inflatables, games and a drawing, and then can walk down to the 4-H Drovers Petting Zoo, sponsored by Brad Hoffman Insur- ance in Fenton.”

Adults will have an opportunity to enjoy workshops from local businesses that set up at specific times in classrooms to provide more in-depth knowledge than they can offer in a booth. “These will be offered by participating businesses both Saturday and Sunday,” said Day.

There’s even money to be won at the Expo. From the popular money-grab booths sponsored by The State Bank to a 50/50 drawing at the conclusion of the event on Sunday at 4 p.m., you can go home from the Expo with more money than you came with. That’s especially true because there’s no admission charged to get into the Expo, thanks to the generosity of the event’s two major sponsors, Coldwell Banker Professionals and Sharp Funeral Homes.

Tickets for the 50/50 drawing are available at the Fenton Regional Chamber’s booth, with half of the proceeds going to the winner and the other half to Expo planning and organization. “Usually the winner takes home about $400 to $500,” said Day.
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