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Fair's opening ceremony highlights county's generations *Centennial Farm and young essay contest winners to be recognized*

The Evergreen State Fair's opening ceremony Thursday, beginning at 2 p.m., will highlight generational changes found in Snohomish County as officials honor a new Centennial Farm Family as well as the youth winners of the first "Living Evergreen" essay contest.

"Snohomish County is a rich mix of cultures, ages and people," said Snohomish County Executive Aaron Reardon. "It's only fitting that the opening ceremony features a diverse cross-section of the county's population."

Tualco Valley farmer Dale Reiner and family will receive this year's Centennial Farm certificate. The Reiner family has actively farmed land in the Tualco Valley outside Monroe since 1873 when Grannis and Amelia Reiner homesteaded property there.

Sons George and Ernest were pivotal dairy farmers in the area and were a key part of the Carnation Condensery in Monroe. All that is left of the factory is the old smoke stack at Main Street.

Generations of Reiners continued to farm the land, splitting land and time between dairy and Willamette raspberries, which produced so well that other farmers in the area began growing them, too.

Currently, Dale Reiner farms about 420 acres. They run more than 30 head of purebred Angus cows and calves for custom meat production and breeding stock, they have 81 acres in the area's first and largest Conservation Reserve Enhancement Project (a habitat and bank restoration program), and 18 acres of Christmas trees and native nursery tree stock. The family also grows 15 acres of canola for biofuel production as well as 60 acres rented to a local dairy farm for field corn and hay production.

"The Reiner family has been one of the most productive farm families in Snohomish County," Reardon said. "What makes them successful is their willingness to adapt to changing markets and innovate when needed."

Also to be honored Thursday are six students from the Puget Sound region for their winning essays in the "Living Evergreen" essay contest, co-sponsored by Snohomish County and Allied Waste.

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Divided into two categories – middle school students and high school students – contestants were asked to discourse on the growing need to be environmentally friendly. Some contestants focused on the changes they and their families had made, while others looked at solutions for a changing world, including business impacts on the environment.

While winners have been notified, however, first-, second- and third-place designations will be announced during the opening ceremony.

First-place winners will receive a \$200 U.S. treasury bond and an opportunity to read their essays before Snohomish County's elected leadership. Second-place winners receive \$100 bonds, while third-place winners received \$50. An additional honorable mention has been made.

“The judges were impressed at the caliber of entries, considering that a summer essay contest meant no prodding by teachers to enter,” said Reardon, who also judged entries. “The winning entries were heartfelt, sincere and demonstrated students' individual concerns and appreciation for sustainable practices.”

Also in attendance Thursday will be Snohomish County Dairy Ambassador Emily Neff and Washington State Dairy Ambassador Kristyn Mensonides. Finally, Sharon Olsen, this year's Fair Honoree, will be cutting the ribbon to open the fair.

The opening ceremony will be held at the Comcast Courtyard Stage.

Opening day admission is free to all from 10 a.m. to 1 p.m. The fair opens at 10 a.m. each day and closes at 10 p.m. except for closing day, Sept. 6, when the fair closes at 7 p.m. Carnival hours are 11 a.m. to 11 p.m. except for closing day, when it also closes at 7 p.m.

For more information and a full listing of all the fair's special promotions, go to www.evergreenfair.org or call 360-805-6700.

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