

Growing Healthy Events is Healthy Business

**A Guide for County Fairs × Festivals ×
Cultural Celebrations × Exhibits × Concerts × Other Events**



How One Small County Created a Healthy and Successful Fair



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Proud Sponsor
Marin County Fair

Growing Healthy Events is Healthy Business

Join us on the adventure of creating an event that attracts guests, and excites vendors and sponsors, while bringing “healthy” to your community! It’s good for your community, and good for business.

A festival that is healthy, fun, smoke-free, and safe will attract individuals and families from across your community. Making these seemingly small changes are good business strategies – and can happen without negative impacts in attendance or profits.

No matter the season, reason, or age of your audience, major community events such as fairs and festivals can reap big benefits by making small changes with a wide impact. Guests, vendors, leaders, and your community are READY! A healthy and family-friendly event will

attract media attention, new community partners, innovative sponsors and other funding sources.

We’re not talking about eliminating turkey legs or cotton candy. It’s about celebrating what you’re already doing well and adding healthy choices. Addressing the wants and needs of your visitors makes every event a success. It is fun, sustainable, and a proven strategy - and creates a healthier, happy, memorable day.

This guide is based on the experience of the Marin County Fair in Northern California, which drew attention, partners and value by making a series of strategic changes. For more than 10 years, these steps have been shifting expectations of visitors to the fair.

This guide was created to make it easier for your community to make **SMALL CHANGES** that lead to **CONTINUED SUCCESS**.

These changes can be made at your event with similar healthy, happy and positive results.

And – most importantly – creating a healthier event is the right thing to do.



Western Fairs Association & National Awards Recognitions include:

- ♦ 2004 2nd Place for Community Outreach (Prevention Pavilion)
- ♦ 2005 1st Place for Community Outreach (Prevention Pavilion)
- ♦ 2006 1st Place for Incentive Programs For Business Partners (Healthy Food Choices) and 2nd Place for Community Outreach (Prevention Pavilion)
- ♦ 2006 1st Place for Fair Sponsorship Involvement (Play Fair Pavilion and Moving Beyond Alcohol Sponsorships)
- ♦ 2007 Honorable Mention for Community Outreach (Prevention Pavilion)
- ♦ 2007 2nd Place for Fair Sponsorship Involvement (Play Fair Pavilion and Prevention Pavilion)
- ♦ 2013 & 2014 USDA SNAP Ed Grant
- ♦ 2014 Western Fairs Association Blue Ribbon Award





PHOTO: STAN PECHNER

Background

The Marin County Fair, Play Fair Marin and Healthy Marin Partnership have received numerous awards from the Western Fairs Association and national attention for addressing health and safety needs of its community in innovative creative ways.

The Marin County Fair and its community partners boldly and creatively partnered to tackle increasing medical problems and worsening health trends like obesity, alcohol abuse, and tobacco use in fun and culturally relevant ways by creating Play Fair Marin. In 2004 Play Fair Marin replaced an alcohol vendor as the title sponsor of the Marin County Fair. Fair guests were then greeted by the Play Fair banner (rather than beer advertisement) on arrival, and it's been that way ever since. In 2005, the fair eliminated alcohol advertising altogether.

It was big news when the Marin County Fair became the first smoke-free fair in the nation. Volunteer health ambassadors helped direct smokers to special tents set up just for smokers right outside the fairgrounds. Nightly fireworks and carnival lights became the only things lighting up the night!

To address the community's obesity problem, food vendors were required to add at least one nutritious (and tasty) choice to their menus, providing a healthier option for guests to enjoy. Guests could be seen eating healthy local and ethnic foods, corn on the cob, watermelon slices, vegetarian burritos, smoothies, and more. Bitsy

bites, smaller versions of tasty treats like funnel cakes, reduced the portion and calories of other fair favorites. Noticing the popularity of healthy menu items, some food vendors even took their new items on the road to other festivals! How great is that?

Music, bright lights, and summer days made for tired babies. The fair's Baby Sanctuary provided a restful place to care for infants



with comfortable rocking chairs for breastfeeding. Diaper changing stations and activities for toddlers helped families spend more time enjoying the fair. For older kids – eager to run once they get through the gates – the 1K Fun Run was just the ticket.

The work of changing healthy practices at the Marin County Fair didn't stop there. Bilingual youth and adult health ambassadors are always nearby with a healthy riddle, packs of sunscreen, and maps of the fairgrounds.

Play Fair Marin now includes more than a dozen community partners that continue finding new ways to make the Marin County Fair the healthiest and greenest fair on earth!

PLAY FAIR definition: To act in a way that is right and just to families, children and our community, building health, equity and social justice while having fun.



The health of a community is the shared responsibility of all who live, learn, work, and play in the community.

How to Use this Guide

You will find that on most weekends your community, town or county has fairs, festivals, celebrations, exhibits, fundraisers, concerts or other events where these tools can be used. In Marin County,* we identified more than 380 such events spread over the year. Just imagine the possibilities and places to start!

This guide is designed for use by anyone involved in organizing a community event, fair, music or art festival, cultural celebration, museum exhibit, concert, sporting event, or fundraiser. It is also a tool for community organizations, schools, health departments, or other community serving agencies looking for new and innovative ways to impact the health of a community.

You may be surprised how eager community partners, such as food and other vendors, are to embrace these ideas; yet, others may be a bit hesitant at first. With time, they will come to appreciate the positive impacts on their popularity, sales, customers, and revenues; eagerly becoming part of making their communities healthier.

Follow some of the easy and simple steps you'll find on the following pages. What works in one community may not be so effective in another. Get creative and see what works where you live.



Understand Your Community; Know Your Audience

Your community probably has health and social issues that can be impacted at fairs and festivals. People want to be healthy; businesses want happy customers and to give them what they want.

For Example: Alcohol consumption by adults and teens in Marin is alarmingly higher than the average rates in both California and the United States. That's where we decided to start focusing attention.

What are your community's alarming statistics?

- ✓ Gather information to identify community health needs. Contact your local hospital, health department and community foundations. Major health concerns, needs and effective health strategies will differ from one community to the next depending on culture, age and geography.
- Alcohol consumption, especially among youth, tends to be an issue in most communities. Consider starting where Play Fair Marin started: by replacing alcohol manufacturers as event sponsors.
- If smoking is an issue in your community, create designated smoking sections to make the event mostly smoke-free but still welcoming to all.
- If diabetes and obesity are an issue, focus on healthy food choices and promote the vendors who are offering healthy food.
- ✓ Engage community members from the start. Make sure to invite all ages and cultures from youth to older adults to work together. Make room in brainstorming sessions for everyone to participate.
- ✓ Search out partners rooted in your community. The most effective partners will include people and organizations from across the community who are optimistic about change.

*About Our County: Marin County, California borders the Golden Gate Bridge and the City of San Francisco (to the south), Sonoma County (to the north) and the Pacific Ocean (to the west). Marin County is 828 square miles, (73% land [50% of which is agricultural] and 37% water. The population of Marin County is 252,409.

The Marin County Fair Before & After Ban on Alcohol Sponsorship

Who sponsors the event?



Alcohol-Aware

Beer company logos are a familiar sight at most fairs and festivals. Research from the Center on Alcohol Marketing and Youth has demonstrated for years that youth exposure to alcohol sponsorship and promotion encourages youth to drink—and often to excess. Given the high rates of underage and binge drinking nationally, replacing alcohol sponsorship may seem like a good place to start and could result in a reduction in violence, fights, sexual assaults, and auto crashes.

- ✓ Replace alcohol vendors as sponsors.
- ✓ Implement a policy that bans alcohol sponsorships in your event. This may require partnering with elected officials to pass a local ordinance.
- ✓ Scan the midway. Do your carnival games or prizes promote alcohol?

Reduce Alcohol Problems and Engage Your Community

- ✓ Require training in Responsible Beverage Service for staff selling alcohol.
 - Partner with law enforcement and community prevention coalitions to deliver convenient trainings.
 - Role play the management of intoxicated individuals.
 - Practice reviewing identification to avoid illegal sales to minors.
 - Prohibit servers from consuming alcohol.



BEFORE BAN



AFTER BAN

- ✓ Require all alcohol servers to be 21 years of age or older.
- ✓ Develop and enforce consequences for vendors who sell to obviously intoxicated individuals or to minors.
- ✓ Conduct regular compliance checks using trained underage decoys in partnership with local law enforcement and community initiatives.
- ✓ Visible presence of law enforcement at alcohol booths is a great way to decrease problems related to youth attempting to purchase or over consume.
- ✓ Standardize alcohol sales:
 - Require mandatory and consistent pricing.
 - Limit cup sizes to 12 ounces.
 - All beverage cups should be transparent.
 - Limit 2 beverages per person, per purchase.
 - Prohibit guests from bringing alcohol onto festival grounds.
 - Stop serving alcohol one hour before event ends.
 - Post signage with alcohol policies in multiple languages at each vendor station.
 - Require proof of identification for every customer at every sale.
 - Wrist bracelets verifying that “age” has been checked are OK – but can be removed easily and passed to someone under-age. And, they don’t relieve the seller of the ultimate responsibility for serving to a minor.
- ✓ Engage alcohol vendors: Fraternal and community serving organizations often are the alcohol vendors at fairs and festivals, using proceeds to finance their activities.
- ✓ Celebrate participation in shared responsibility for the communities they serve.
- ✓ Promote the good work of the organization rather than the product being sold by eliminating branded alcohol signs at vendor booths.
- ✓ Create designated drinking areas such as beer gardens.
- ✓ Provide training to health ambassadors and other volunteers in consequences of alcohol misuse and health education.
- ✓ It may be easier than you think to find corporate sponsors eager to have their names and logos promoting “healthy” in an innovative way.

Good Fare = Fun Fair

Celebrate and highlight healthy options already offered at your festival. Collaborate with food vendors to provide a diverse variety of healthy food choices ~ assuring items are prepared trans-fat free, served in biodegradable containers and represent cross-cultural cuisine.



Good Fare

- ✓ **Require** food vendors to develop menus that include at least one “healthy option” at a competitive price.
- ✓ Feature healthy menu items and vendors in event marketing, brochure, website, and social media.
 - Provide training to health ambassadors and other volunteers in promoting healthier eating.
- ✓ Promote healthy strategies to the media.
 - Avoid marketing that promotes unhealthy choices and activities.
- ✓ Add vendors’ healthy food items to event maps and guides.
- ✓ Partner with local culinary organizations and dietitians to offer food vendor trainings and consultations on how to create healthy menus.
- ✓ Include healthy food contests for guests and exhibitors.
 - Invite professional chefs and young people to judge for a variety of taste preferences.

- ✓ Offer healthy cooking demonstrations. Restaurants, restaurant supply stores, and chefs will eat up the attention.
- ✓ Create prominent eye-catching signage for healthy food options.
- ✓ Offer reduced-portion sizes for “tasty treats” (fair favorite) menu items.
- ✓ It may be easier than you think to find corporate sponsors eager to have their names and logos promoting “healthy” in an innovative way.



Locate smoking tent outside event gate!



Smoke-Free

No amount of exposure to tobacco smoke is safe. In fact, all forms of smoke are harmful (from tobacco, marijuana, and even electronic cigarettes). Adopting a smoke-free policy affirms a family-friendly atmosphere in a safer, healthier environment.

Both smokers and non-smokers can be helped by policies that restrict smoking and clearly designate smoking areas outside event gates. Guests who smoke will appreciate being supported by these policies, and community members will appreciate not being exposed to second-hand smoke.

Ban tobacco sponsorships in your event and limit tobacco use to designated smoking areas outside event gates. Transitioning to a smoke-free event can be aided by local community partners who champion reducing second-hand smoke.

- ✓ Replace tobacco sponsorships with a community collaborative, nonprofit or other type of business.

**These policies
save lives**

- ✓ Ban tobacco marketing.
- ✓ Eliminate tobacco-branded giveaways.
- ✓ Ban smoking except in designated smoking areas.
- ✓ Create designated smoking areas in highly visible locations outside event gates.
- ✓ Actively redirect all types of smoking to designated areas.
- ✓ Make sure all signage is bilingual to reflect the community.
- ✓ Provide training to staff, health ambassadors and volunteers in tobacco related problems and prevention.



Earth Friendly Events

Earth friendly is family friendly! There are many creative ways to make your event more environmentally friendly.

- ✓ Partner with local conservation organizations on waste diversion and composting.
- ✓ Provide training to vendors on recycling practices.
- ✓ Require vendors to use compostable containers.
- ✓ Place eco stations with bins for compost, recycleables and landfill trash throughout the fairgrounds. Don't forget to staff the eco stations or provide instructions showing what goes where.

- ✓ Partner with local bike organizations to offer complimentary bicycle valet parking.
- ✓ Replace light fixtures with energy-conserving bulbs.
- ✓ Invite attendees to bring their own reusable empty water containers. Provide water stations throughout the event.
- ✓ Encourage interactive learning

opportunities and discourage exhibitors from handing out paper fliers, brochures, or other materials. They'll just end up in the trash or fly away in the wind.

- ✓ It may be easier than you think to find corporate sponsors eager to have their names and logos promoting "healthy" in an innovative way.
- ✓ For more ideas visit "Greening The Fair" on the Marin Fair webpage.





PHOTO: STAN PECHNER

Your festival will sizzle with healthy excitement.

Health happens best where you live, work and come to play!

Visitors come to your festival to have fun and play! Creating an environment that encourages health and physical wellness will add to the overall experience and memory of your festival. It will be appreciated by visitors and will even contribute to changes in the social and community fabric of your community.

- ✓ Creating healthy activities leads to families staying longer, brings valuable and free media attention, and word-of-mouth advertising!
- ✓ Create a clean and comfortable place for families to feed and change babies – and for parents to rest their tired feet. You'll find that families will stay at your event longer. And a sponsor will be easy to find!

How many steps does it take to walk around your festival?



Flourish

Work with sponsors and partners to create venues, booths and activities that culturally represent your community and highlight and promote fun physical activity. Family runs and races, hula hooping contests, conga lines, and flash mobs can be easily added to festival attractions.

- ✓ Kids love to run. Create a fun run to get them moving and excited about being active. Invite parents with strollers to join the fun.
- ✓ Offer and promote free valet bicycle parking. Bicycle coalitions and other advocates for nonmotorized transportation LOVE this attention.
- ✓ Give out free pedometers for guests to track their steps and win prizes as they reach milestones while walking around the festival. With so many businesses promoting physical activity, finding a sponsor for pedometers will be easy.
- ✓ Organize and promote a scavenger hunt.
 - Use the course to promote vendors with healthy menu items.
 - Highlight other points of interest and offerings along the route, providing fun “clues to good health.”
 - Give passes to a local YMCA as prizes.
- ✓ Bike blenders - where kids pedal to make fresh fruit smoothies - are fun combinations of healthy fun, food and activity (watch a sample video at youtu.be/25m7vdkjLE).
- ✓ Provide training to health ambassadors to engage people in healthy chats, like asking people about their favorite fruit or vegetable or challenging them to do 10 push-ups for a prize. Make it fun!
- ✓ It may be easier than you think to find corporate sponsors eager to have their names and logos promoting “healthy” in an innovative way.



Health Ambassador Team

Health ambassadors can be the fun faces of your event. Train them in nutrition, drug awareness, health education and customer service. It is an investment that will keep growing. Recruit energetic, diverse and bilingual community members.

Health ambassadors wander around the event in fun, bright colored T-shirts and interact with event-goers. They might ask healthy riddles, give out sunscreen, direct folks to booths dedicated to healthy and delicious foods, tell kids about fun activities, manage safety concerns with security and law enforcement, direct smokers to designated smoking areas, give out maps of the events, and help guests find their way around.

- ✓ Recruit youth (and adult) volunteers from the community to be health ambassadors.
- ✓ Require event customer service training.
 - Ask community partners to train the health ambassadors in expert areas. For example, ask the Smoke-Free Coalition to train health ambassadors on the different kinds of smoke and related health problems.
 - Develop simple talking points for your priorities. One-liners and 8-second sound-bites will keep it easy.
- ✓ Have health ambassadors sport brightly colored T-shirts for easy identification. Guests will want to know more!
- ✓ It may be easier than you think to find corporate sponsors eager to have their names and logos promoting “healthy” in an innovative way.



- ✓ Offer incentives like stipends, community service hours, and school credit to thank health ambassadors for their contributions to the healthy event.
- ✓ Health ambassadors' shifts should be no longer than 4 hours at a time. It's difficult keep energy high level for much longer.
- ✓ Provide health ambassadors with admission and parking passes.
- ✓ Welcome health ambassadors to the beginning of their shift. Make sure all ages are valued for their experiences. Be available during their shifts for support and encouragement.
- ✓ Pair bilingual and monolingual health ambassadors whenever possible.
- ✓ Encourage and document health ambassador stories and experiences. They are the eyes and ears of the event.
- ✓ Ask health ambassadors what works. Involve them in brainstorming as representatives of the community.
- ✓ Furnish prizes and incentives for health ambassadors to pass out to engage guests in healthy conversations. They don't have to be big prizes, but they should be healthy ones.
- ✓ Have fun!

Get the Word Out

- ✓ Include healthy messages in your marketing strategy.
- ✓ Identify staff to promote the event using all forms of media to different audiences by age, gender, culture, ethnicity, or use of technology.
- ✓ Use social media as a low-cost way to promote the event.
- ✓ Before and during the event, highlight the healthy food options, free bicycle parking and fun physical activities for children (Fun Run, hula hoop, etc.)
- ✓ Create a #hashtag for your event such as #YourFairName. Invite participants to share their photos from the event on social media using a #hashtag. Some social media sites to use: Instagram, YouTube, Twitter, Facebook, others.
- ✓ Ask partners to share your messaging, particularly to groups who would appreciate your healthy changes like



“Mommy” bloggers and social media influencers (local people with large followings on Facebook or Twitter) to announce the healthy food choices and family friendly activities happening at the event.

- ✓ Send event announcements and press releases to local media (newspapers, local TV stations, radio, magazines, bloggers).
- ✓ Prepare a letter to the editor or longer opinion column to your local newspapers well in advance of the event and reach out to editorial page editor to schedule the publication.
- ✓ Work with local elected officials to review and support healthy policies and ordinances. Write press releases about how they have helped. They will appreciate the attention.

MARIN COUNTY FAIR

JULY 1 - 5 | SAN RAFAEL, CA

The Healthiest Fair on Earth!

Nutrition Facts	1 Fair
Serving Size	1 Fair
Run the Fun Run	10%
Drink lots of water	10%
Wear sunscreen	10%
Rest at the Baby Sanctuary	10%
Eat healthy foods	10%
Limit high sugar snacks	10%
Wash your hands	10%
Recycle and compost	10%
Pick up trash	10%
Avoid alcohol & cigarettes	10%
Healthy Fair	100%

marinfair.org
#marincountyfair

Play Fair

Who Are Your Partners?

Create healthy community partnerships and collaborations.

Look in your own community for organizations eager to partner with you. Some may already be among existing partners and vendors. You'll be surprised at how eagerly others will jump at the opportunity to join the fun:

- ✓ Smoke-free coalitions
- ✓ Healthy eating and active living partnerships
- ✓ Alcohol- and drug-free community coalitions
- ✓ Breastfeeding coalitions
- ✓ Health and fitness centers

- ✓ Hospitals, medical centers and physicians groups
- ✓ Youth-serving organizations
- ✓ Faith-based organizations and collaboratives
- ✓ Health departments
- ✓ Community foundations
- ✓ Community health workers and champions like Promotores (bilingual and peer supporters)
- ✓ Nonprofits (especially those already working at your event)
- ✓ Local colleges, fraternities, sororities, and clubs
- ✓ Regional occupational programs, dietetic programs



- ✓ Culinary programs
- ✓ Police and sheriff's departments
- ✓ Food banks and food pantries
- ✓ Schools and Head Start sites
- ✓ Farmers markets
- Consider perks for partners who agree to be part of these innovative efforts:
- ✓ Recognition signage and banners throughout the fair
- ✓ Advertising or editorial space in the event program
- ✓ Link from your website to theirs
- ✓ Inclusion in other media promotions
- ✓ Booth space in a community partners sections

Celebrate Success

As you go about making some healthier changes at your event, there are a few questions that will come up: (1) How to tell which changes worked and which did not? (2) How to tweak efforts going forward? (3) How to share success stories with sponsors, media, colleagues, and community?

Most of the time you can see or feel that great change is happening. But how can you be sure, and how do you talk about it?

Keeping track of activities and results can be simple and is worth the time and effort. Taking photos also chronicles efforts and provides fun testimonials celebrating accomplishments.

- ✓ Develop a short checklist that health ambassadors can use each shift to track conversations with guests :
 - How many families do they direct to the Baby Sanctuary?
 - How many smokers do they redirect to smoking tents?
 - How much sunscreen or other give-aways do they hand out?
- ✓ Ask guests to the Baby Sanctuary a few questions:
 - What's their home town?
 - Is this their first time to the event?
 - How long will they be staying at the event? And will they come again?
 - Keep track of total number of guests to the Baby Sanctuary so you can share this growing number with the sponsor.
- ✓ Have vendors track sales of healthier menu options.
- ✓ How many people are joining in family-fun activities?



- ✓ Are you passing out pedometers? Keep track of the total number of steps walked at your event.
- ✓ Research local automobile crashes, DUIs, and other alcohol-related incidents during the days of the event. How do the numbers compare from year to year?
- ✓ What is the tonnage of waste diverted from landfills because of your eco-friendly practices?
- ✓ What are people saying about the event online?
- ✓ And of course: Have revenues increased or decreased since taking these steps?
- ✓ Photos, photos, photos! Proof is in the smiles of your guests.

Play Fair Final Words of Advice

Take on what is manageable – one step at a time. There is always next time for adding and editing what works and doesn't. Commit to making small changes, one event at a time. Just making a few small changes can make a big impact in the health and social norms of your community.

It is OK to start with small steps! One of our first steps was a colorful booth that celebrated and educated fair-goers on health. We passed out pedometers, took blood pressures and had fun hula hooping with kids and families.

Promote and market your efforts! You have every right to be proud of the impact your event has on your community.



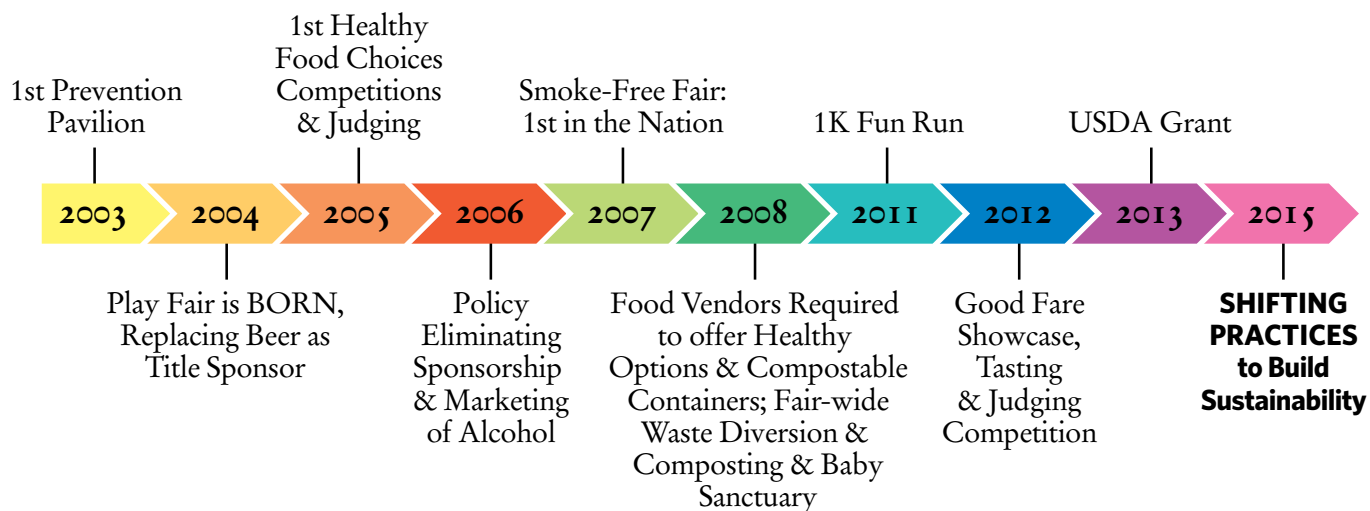
**If we can do it,
so can you!**





PHOTO: STAN PECHNER

Small Changes that Led to Success



The Play Fair Marin Story

It's hard to imagine now, but not so long ago two beer companies were title sponsors of the Marin County Fair. Play Fair Marin replaced those sponsors, and has worked with the Marin County Fair to end all alcohol marketing, sponsorship and promotion. This nationally recognized initiative has realigned messages, helping to shape community and family values related to alcohol for future generations.

Continuing its groundbreaking efforts, Play Fair supported the Marin County Fair's efforts when, in 2007, it became the first

100 percent smoke-free fair in the nation. Play Fair's other initiatives are just as groundbreaking, including:

- Working with food vendors to add healthy food options to their menus, with prizes for exceptional healthy fare
- Partnering with WIC (Women, Infant, and Children, a food program for families) and the Marin Breastfeeding Coalition to host the Baby Sanctuary – a cool, comfortable place for families to care for the needs of infants

- Co-hosting with local YMCA an Annual 1K Fun Run on Kids Day – a free race – once around the fairground.

Realizing the great successes and ease of coordinating these efforts, and providing lasting sustainability, Marin County Fair organizers are actively adopting these initiatives into their planning process. Play Fair Marin proudly continues supporting these efforts and remains title sponsor of the Marin County Fair.

Play Fair Partners include:

Alcohol Justice • Bay Area Community Resources • First 5 Marin Children & Families Commission
Healthy Marin Partnership (*including Hospital Council of Northern & Central California • Kaiser Permanente San Rafael Medical Center • Marin General Hospital • North Bay Leadership Council • San Rafael Chamber of Commerce • Sutter Novato Community Hospital • United Way of the Bay Area*)
Huckleberry Youth Programs • Marin Community Foundation • Marin County Board of Supervisors
Marin County Department of Health & Human Services • Marin County Office of Education

Download a copy of this guide at www.PlayFairMarin.org

