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Courtesy of the Buckwheat Festival Committee

Members of the royalty for the 83rd Annual Buckwheat Festival are, from left, First Runner-Up to King Buckwheat Austin Tennant, First Maid of Honor Chelsea Kelly, Queen Ceres 83 Brooklyn Casteel, King Buckwheat 83 Rick Deal, Second Maid of Honor Lydia Arnold and Escort to Second Maid of Honor Hunter Harrison.



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What's new at the 83rd Preston County Buckwheat Festival



Associated Press

Josh Ross, who won the Entertainer of the Year award at the Canadian Country Music Association Awards on Sept. 13, will perform at 8 p.m. Saturday.

BY LOGAN D. COTTRELL

For the Dominion Post

KINGWOOD — Over the course of the past 83 years of the Preston County Buckwheat Festival, changes have been made to entertainment and even the menus, and this year is no different.

One of the many new changes for this year's festival is the implementation of a brand-new acoustic music stage.

"We have the traditional main stage that is down near the south end of the fairground, where we have the big headliners," said Chase Thomas, the general chairman of the 83rd Preston County Buckwheat Festival. "But down here right in front of the arts and crafts section we're actually going to have a small more intimate stage where it's all acoustic music, all local folks from Preston County and the general area."

Thomas noted the implementation of the acoustic stage will allow people browsing the arts and crafts section of the festival will be able to listen to music.

One of the other new attractions coming to the festival is a mobile aquarium, Thomas said.

"It stems from a partnership between the West Virginia Division of Natural Resources and the West Virginia Department of Environmental Protection," he said. "It's a 2,000-gallon mobile aquarium. The cool thing about it is that it was built just up the street at Preston Machine Inc."

Making a return from last year are the buckwheat cones, Thomas added.

Continuing to grow off the success of the outdoor music stage this year it is going to get even bigger, Thomas said.

"This year we're going even bigger, for example our Saturday night headliner is Josh Ross, who was No. 1 on the U.S. Country Music Charts," he said. "It's kind of unexpected. He just blew up over the summer, in the sake of going big or going home and we've chosen to go big. Music is a huge part of Preston County culture and something people enjoy."

This year's theme for the festival is "Where the Mountains Come Alive."

MUSIC SCHEDULE

- **Thursday, Sept 25:** Some Kinda Normal (5:30 p.m.) • Ask Alice (8:30 p.m.)
- **Friday, Sept 26:** Ella Wheeler (4 p.m.), Clay Justice (5 p.m.), Kaleb Sanders (6:30 p.m.), Lakeview (8 p.m.)
- **Saturday, Sept 27:** Brennan Edwards (4 p.m.), Cody Clayton Eagle (5 p.m.), Preston Cooper (6:30 p.m.), Josh Ross (8 p.m.)
- **Sunday, Sept 28:** Band Reeves (1 p.m.)

Plus, don't miss this year's debut of the Arts & Crafts Acoustic Stage! Local acoustic acts on Friday and Saturday also bring the charming mountain vibe alive!

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Introducing Queen Ceres 83: Brooklyn Casteel



BY LOGAN D. COTTRELL

For the Dominion Post

KINGWOOD — Brooklyn Casteel, a senior at Preston High School, was crowned as Queen Ceres 83 and has spent the past summer touring West Virginia and spreading information about what the Buckwheat Festival is and what the culture of Preston County is like.

Casteel noted it has been an honor to serve as Queen Cere 83.

"There's no other word I can truly use to describe that, it's been nothing short of an honor," she said. "It's been a lot of fun working with this group, we're very diverse in our opinions and hobbies, but I think we make a fun little family. My biology teacher described being on the Buckwheat Festival Royal Court as Preston County's cream of the crop."

Casteel shared the importance of agriculture in the history of the Buckwheat Festival.

"The Buckwheat Festival before it was the Buckwheat Festival was the Preston County Fair," she said. "It started as an agriculture fair and that's really in any county fair you'll find. There's no rides, no games and no music. There's livestock

and fresh baked pies, because that's what this county is built on.

"This county is built on buckwheat and this county is built on tradition, and I think all of these other things are great but, we need to put lots of emphasis on our agriculture. It's what we do best. We're ranked number one in the state for agriculture, and as a county that's something we need to continue to honor."

The best part of the Buckwheat Festival in Casteel's opinion is the livestock and agriculture.

"That's where I spend the majority of my time," she said. "Everyone in that barn has become a family to me. You show from (ages) 8 to 19 so you grow up with the same group of kids, everyone becomes a family, everyone else's parents become your parents. You learn about and work and help each other out.

"That is truly the only place where education has become fun, and that's why I look forward to it so much. I know I'm going to learn and I know I'm going to have fun. It's a true representation of hard work paying off."

BIO

Brooklyn Rose Casteel is the daughter of Adam and Kristen Casteel of Bruceton Mills, West Virginia. She has a younger sister, London Casteel, who is currently serving as a Junior Princess on the 83rd Buckwheat Festival Royalty Court. Brooklyn is currently a student at Preston High School, where she is involved in both her school and community. Brooklyn is a member of Preston High School's National Honor Society, serves as the reporter for the HOSA chapter, president for the Preston County FFA Chapter, and sits as a student representative on the Preston County Board of Education. Outside of academics, Brooklyn is the President of the Bits and Bridles 4-H Club, and she has served as a Junior Board Member the past three years for the Preston County Livestock Association. After high school, Brooklyn hopes to further her education and achieve her lifelong dream of becoming a veterinarian.

Brooklyn embodies the Queen Ceres title as she is a first-generation agriculturalist. Agriculture is more than just a hobby for Brooklyn — it is a passion. She was inspired at a young age to take part in the agriculture industry after seeing the exhibits at the Buckwheat Festival each year growing up. This lit a fire in Brooklyn, and she soon knew it was something she had to convince her parents to be a part of. She exhibits club lambs at not only the Buckwheat Festival, but numerous shows throughout the east coast, including the State Fair of West Virginia — where she was named the Grand Champion Intermediate Lamb Showman in 2024. She has also raised commercial swine for the FFA Chapter's annual Ham, Bacon, and Egg Show and Sale. She has sold pork as private sale to families, encouraging and representing a direct farm-to-table process.

Brooklyn would like to thank her family, especially her parents, for encouraging her to serve Preston County as Queen Ceres the 83rd. Brooklyn would also like to thank Chase Thomas and Mike Shaffer for allowing all of the magic and dreams to become reality. However, her biggest thank you goes to God. Brooklyn hopes that the Preston County Buckwheat Festival can and will continue to allow young people to discover and chase their passions, just as it did for her.

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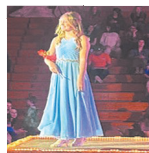
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Introducing King Buckwheat 83: Rick Deal



BY LOGAN D. COTTRELL

For the Dominion Post

KINGWOOD — Rick Deal has been crowned King Buckwheat number 83 and has spent the entire summer on tour showing what it means to be King Buckwheat and showing off the culture of Preston County.

Deal noted he threw his hat in the ring to be King Buckwheat because people around him said he would be a good candidate.

“I really had a lot of people saying you should do this,” he said. “It also falls back on my family’s legacy with agriculture and buckwheat while also bringing the Buckwheat Festival back to what it was founded on.”

“It feels excellent that the county has trusted you to uphold the legacy of the Buckwheat Festival.”

The process of becoming King Buck-

wheat is very in depth, Deal said.

“We get a packet about an inch and a half thick of information with agricultural knowledge,” he said. “It’s full of information collected throughout the years with agricultural information. You’ll go in front of judges and they will ask you all types of different questions. You have to be really good at answering questions off the top of your head and how good you are at answering questions under pressure.”

Deal added a good portion of the process has to do with the knowledge of agriculture and other various topics.

Deal also noted part of his process includes a farm tour.

“The farm visits are high stakes, where you practically do a tour of your farm,” he said. “You want to show off the best you can and be able to answer questions about your farm and know everything there is to know.”

BIO

Rick Glenn Deal, from the Hazelton, Bruceton Mills, area, is the only son of Ronald Wayne Deal. He is a third-generation farmer.

He grew up on their family farm on Harner Road. Agronomy is his favorite thing to do, while he also has interest in their cattle herd, mechanics, and fabrication. The family raises beef cattle along with many types of forage(s) for silage and hay.

Rick also loves the manager position of their Ag supply business, R&R Farms. He plans to continue running the business after graduation and working on their farm. He also plans to open another type of business including fabrication or animal processing, he has not decided yet.

Rick is an active member of the Preston County FFA Chapter. He served as the Chaplin from 2023 to 2024. Rick is also a member of the American Welding Society. Rick would like to thank his family and friends for their support and everything they do for him.



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Congratulations on a successful Festival!



Introducing First Maid of Honor: Chelsea Kelly

BY LOGAN D. COTTRELL

For the Dominion Post

KINGWOOD — Chelsea Kelly won the honor of being the First Runner Up to Queen Ceres 83 after participating in two separate pageants.

Kelly noted her family has a history of being part of the Queen Ceres royal court.

"My sister ran for the Buckwheat Courts a couple of years back," she said. "She got princess, and I have always looked up to my sister and also my cousin was a previous Queen Ceres, so it was just all of my family has kind of tried running for it in the past, and it's just been a huge thing because the Buckwheat Festival always has meant a lot to us as a family."

Kelly added she even has family that comes in from

North Carolina to celebrate the Buckwheat Festival with her and her family members.

"It just brings us together," she said. "I also wanted to put myself out there because I've been home schooled since fifth grade, and I haven't had a lot of social interactions. I wanted to put myself out there and try to make some friends."

Kelly noted her favorite part of the Buckwheat Festival is all of the different parades.

"I have always enjoyed the parades because I always know someone in them," she said. "I love rooting for people, it's one of my favorite things to do. It's also great seeing my family come together, because my family means more to me than anything and it's a time that we make for it because it's so important to us."

BIO

Chelsea Kelly is the daughter of Amy and Clifford Kelly of Reedsville WV. She has an older sister who inspires her every day, Kayla Parsons. Chelsea has always enjoyed watching the parades every year. It brings her family together for laughter and joy with rides, craft barns and so many treats.

Chelsea loves the role she had the honor of experiencing. She has taken pride in being a role model to young girls across Preston County. She thoroughly enjoyed being in parades across WV and meeting new people, especially those of the royalty court. Chelsea has taken part in volunteering for the Lion's Club and helping with an after-school program. She also devotes her time as a member of the Reedsville United Methodist Church youth group. Upon graduating Chelsea plans to attend mortuary school and become a funeral director. She wants to thank her family for always supporting her through all her ventures. She also wants to thank Chase Thomas and Mike Shaffer for taking such good care of the royalty court and bringing them on so many adventures. She cannot wait to see everyone at the Buckwheat Festival!



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Introducing First Runner-Up: Austin Tennant

BY LOGAN D. COTTRELL
For the Dominion Post

KINGWOOD — Austin Tennant, a senior at Preston High School, has been named First Runner Up for King Buckwheat 83.

Tennant noted his family doesn't have any connection with the Buckwheat Festival Royal Court.

"It was something that I've seen my close friends do, and I was like I'll shoot my shot and see how I would do," Tennant said. "My family never really had any connection to agriculture at all until I decided I wanted to do it. I have been doing livestock shows for the past nine years.

"I've always had a connection with the Buckwheat Festival and wanting to represent what it means to me."

Tennant shared his favorite part of the Buckwheat Festival is also the livestock shows.

"It's something I've changed from showing sheep to showing hogs and just having fun with that," he said. "Livestock is something the Buckwheat Festival was built on, it was originally livestock and just seeing it as it has grown, we've talked about getting a new barn for our livestock animals and continue to see the livestock part of the Buckwheat Festival grow."

BIO

Austin Tennant is the son of Tyler and Maranda Tennant of Reedsville; he has one younger sister Taylor Tennant. Austin has shown hogs and lambs in previous Preston County Buckwheat Festival along with several animals he tends for on his family farm. Austin has been a member of the Preston County Livestock Association as well as the Boots-N-Buckles 4H club for nine years.

He has been a part of the Preston County Marching Knights for four years as well as the Preston High School Jazz Band for three years. Austin will also be a completer in the Admissions CTE program. After graduating in May, Austin plans on getting his degree in Elementary Education at Fairmont State University.

Austin would like to thank the KVFD for allowing him to represent his community. He would also like to thank his family and friends for supporting him through this journey. Austin also thanks the Preston County Livestock Association and Boots-N-Buckles 4H Club for allowing him to show animals and giving him the chance to work on his showmanship through hard work and determination.



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Introductions to additional royalty

Second Maid of Honor – Lydia Grace Arnold

Lydia Arnold is the daughter of Barry and Nancy Arnold, from Aurora. She takes pride in her academics, as well as her social life. Lydia is a member of Preston High School's National Honor Society where she serves as the Vice President and the National Technical Honors Society where she serves as the Secretary. She is also an active member of Preston's HOSA Chapter and Student Government. After high school, Lydia plans to go to college to pursue a degree in medicine, like several of her family members have. Her admiration for helping others and interest in science makes health care the natural route for her future.

Lydia is honored to serve on the 83rd Buckwheat Royalty Court, as the festival holds a cherished place within her family. Watching the Fireman's Parade every year with her aunt, uncle, and cousins, is Lydia's favorite family tradition. Lydia is grateful to have this opportunity to give back to the community that has given so much to her. She would like to thank Chase Thomas, Mike Shaffer, and their families, for all they have done and provided for her and the royalty court.



Escort to Second Maid of Honor – Hunter Reed Harrison

Hunter Harrison is the son of Freddie and Angie Harrison of Terra Alta. Hunter prides himself on his lifelong dedication to his academic and extracurricular activities. He is currently a member of the National Honor Society, the International Thespian Society, the Preston High School Marching Band and Jazz Band, Preston High Theatre and Musical Theatre Ensemble, and the Preston High School Golf Team. He has been on the Principals Honor Roll every semester of high school. Hunter participated in the 2024 and 2025 theatre presentations, and he looks forward to participating in the fall and spring theatre productions his senior year. After graduation, Hunter plans to attend WVU for mechanical engineering, in hopes of obtaining his dream job of working at Universal Studios Orlando as a Creative Engineer.

Hunter has thoroughly enjoyed representing Preston County as part of the Buckwheat Festival Royalty Court, and would like to thank his parents for their support with everything he does.



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2025 PRESTON COUNTY BUCKWHEAT FESTIVAL SEPTEMBER 25 - 28, 2025



My name is Samantha Stone and I am serving as the President of the Preston County Livestock Association. Our organization is youth-driven and works diligently to educate youth in and promote agriculture. PCA seeks to work in conjunction with local 4-H groups and the Preston County FFA Chapter to ensure that the junior membership of PCA has an annual youth show and sale of their consigned market livestock projects.

Special Thank You

The Preston County Livestock Association would like to extend a special thank-you to the Kingwood Volunteer Fire Department, the Preston County Extension Office, Farmers Day Chairman, and the countless volunteers and businesses that support our organization. Without monetary contributions, in-kind donations and manpower, the show and sale would not be possible. We thank you and look forward to seeing you all at the

83rd Annual Preston County Buckwheat Festival.

The Preston County Livestock Association, in cooperation with the KVFD, the FFA chapter, and the 4-H Clubs, are proud to sponsor the annual Buckwheat Festival Junior Livestock Sale.



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The youth exhibitors would like to invite the public to the Youth Livestock Sale, September 27th at 4 p.m. in the Cow Palace. The sale order for 2025 is steers, goats, lambs, and hogs.

Amanda Rinkes holds an antique chalk horse her great aunt won at one of the first Buckwheat Festivals.



An annual tradition since 1938

BY JENIFFER GRAHAM

For the Dominion Post

It was members of Kingwood Volunteer Fire Department that came up with the idea of sponsoring a homecoming celebration to mark the harvest of buckwheat. After a lot of hard work by the members of the VFD and county civic groups, the first festival took place within six weeks of planning, and was held Oct. 13-15, 1938, according to buckwheatfestival.com.

The event included all-day horse trading and a farmer's auction. The early festival activities were located on the east lawn of the courthouse, where attendees enjoyed sack races, hog calling for women, husband calling, nail driving for women, eating contests, tugs of war, and rolling pin throwing.

Buckwheat and other agricultural crops were exhibited, a king and queen were selected, and a banquet of buckwheat cakes and sausage were served.

Louise Shaw, a senior at Kingwood High School was the first Queen Ceres, a name taken from the ancient Roman Goddess of Vegetation. A young Pleasant District farmer, Scott Miller was the first

King Buckwheat. They later became husband and wife. According to Indians Plus the First 100 years, by W. G. "Bill" Williams. They were crowned in front of the courthouse door on the east side of the building facing Price Street.

Harry Brindle was the general chairman the four years before the war and the years after. Williams wrote that during the war years, the Buckwheat Festival was halted and the ground plowed so people of the town that wanted to plant a garden could have a section on a first-come basis.

The festival's success increased interest, culminating in an invitation for local buckwheat cake experts to showcase their skills at the New York World's Fair the following summer, according to buckwheatfestival.com.

During its long history, the Buckwheat Festival has only closed on two occasions. The first was during World War II and the second in 2020 during the COVID-19 pandemic.

The KVFD was organized on March 15, 1926. A bond election was successful, and \$15,000 in bonds were sold. Of that, \$5,500 was for new fire department equipment, and the remainder for city hall.

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A new American-La France fire engine was purchased with part of the money. It arrived in Kingwood the week of Jan. 6, 1927.

On July 11, 1940, the Kingwood Fire Company bought 60 acres of the William G. Brown tract. The acreage was on Brown Avenue to the north, Tunnelton Street to the west, and extending south to Kingwood-Tunnelton Road. The price was \$6,000, or \$100 per acre. Part of the property is now called Fireman's Field, and is where the rides, vendors and concessions are found.

Today, the Buckwheat Festival is held annually during the last week of September. The Historical Marker Database lists it as one of West Virginia's oldest local festivals that reflects the agricultural roots of the community, and stands as a testament to the enduring legacy of buckwheat farming in the county and its role in bringing the community together.



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