



*Illinois Association of Agricultural Fairs*

Dear Fair Queen:

CONGRATULATIONS!

Welcome to the 2025 “MISS ILLINOIS COUNTY FAIR QUEEN PAGEANT”. When you arrive in Springfield on Thursday, January 16<sup>th</sup>, 2025, you will be representing your fair as a Queen and you will be honored as such. As you walk across our stage you will join an elite group of over 4,000 young women who have been Fair Queens in Illinois, including former Illinois First Lady Brenda Edgar, and former Miss America, Judy Ford. The officials of the Illinois Association of Agricultural Fairs and Pageant Crew are anxious to meet you and hope your participation in this four-day event will be exciting and rewarding.

The annual IAAF Convention is one of the largest in Springfield each year. You will find it to be full of county fair flavor; with vendors, great entertainment, and the State Talent Contest as well as informative meetings for fair board members. Take it all in, as this is a once-in-a-lifetime experience, and most of all – HAVE FUN!

On the attached sheets are general instructions and rules to help answer any questions you may have.

Again, Congratulations! We cannot wait to see you in January!

Sincerely,

*Dave Hake*

Dave Hake, State President

Illinois Association of Agricultural Fairs

# **2025 MISS ILLINOIS COUNTY FAIR PAGEANT**

## **GENERAL INFORMATION**

Please check our website [www.illinoiscountyfairs.org](http://www.illinoiscountyfairs.org) for updates.

### **REGISTRATION**

The 64th annual Miss Illinois County Fair Queen Pageant will be held Thursday, January 16th through Sunday, January 19th, 2025. All queens must sign in at the Queen's Registration Desk on the Plaza Level (First Floor) of the Crowne Plaza on Thursday between 9:00 a.m. and 11:00 a.m. The state pageant director, Sandy Hoke, and our State Queen, Natalie Evans, will be present for further instructions and information. Arriving before 11:00 a.m. will ensure you have plenty of time to check in, move in, change clothes, and eat before the orientation and the first rehearsal. The Crowne Plaza staff will do their best to have your room ready when you arrive. If your room is not available, the concierge will store your luggage and you may change for rehearsal in the Sapphire Room.

### **ROOMS AND ACCOMMODATIONS**

Rooms have been reserved for the Queens in the **Crowne Plaza, 300 South Dirksen Parkway, Springfield. Telephone 217/529-7777**. Reservations have been made for Thursday-Sunday nights. If you wish to stay Wednesday, January 15th or check out early on Sunday, please contact the Crowne Plaza directly. Each contestant will have a room with her chaperone which will be reserved in the Queen's name. Rooms are \$119.00 a night plus tax. All charges need to be prepaid with the Crowne Plaza directly.

The Crowne Plaza is reserved for the contestants, State Board, Fair Board members, and Associate members. Reservations will NOT be made if you call. Please check the Springfield Convention and Visitors Bureau's website for a listing of other quality hotels in the area for family and friends.

### **PRELIMINARY COMPETITION GROUPS**

The preliminary competition is divided into two groups. Half of the contestants will compete on Saturday afternoon between 1:00 p.m. and 4:30 p.m. while the other half will compete Saturday evening between 7:00 p.m. and 10:30 p.m. All contestants will participate in a "Grand March" in the afternoon and again in the evening competition. You will be notified of your competition group by December 1st. Groups will also be posted on our website. Convention badges are required for admission to the preliminary competitions.

## **TICKETS AND CONVENTION BADGES**

Queens do not need to purchase badges or tickets to any of the events. They are included in your registration fee. Beginning Friday, January 17th, everyone who attends the pageant or IAAF Convention events will need to wear a convention badge. If you used the form that is included in the pageant application packet to pre-purchase your convention badge, they will be ready to pick up on-site.

Badges are \$25.00 each. Additional badges will be available on the first floor of the Crowne Plaza beginning at 9:30 A.M. on Friday. Children under 10 are free but should wear a badge to avoid questions at the door. All badges will be purchased on the first floor.

Tickets must be purchased in advance for the Banquet and Pageant Finals on Sunday. Most fair boards purchase a block of tickets. For more information or questions, contact:

Tom Schaher, Banquet Chairman, 25794 East North Road, Forrest, IL 61741, 815/657-8826.

## **MAKE-UP AND HAIRSTYLES**

We will not have professionals available to touch up make-up and hair, therefore you should be competition ready upon arrival. For interviews, we recommend a more natural yet professional look. You will want more color onstage as the stage lights will wash you out.

## **TANNING**

There's no doubt that we feel better in a swimsuit when we are tan. Remember it is January, please consider this as you choose to tan or not. There are many safe tanning options these days.

## **TATTOOS AND PIERCINGS**

All visible tattoos must be covered with cosmetics or a band-aid. Piercings are limited to one per earlobe. All other body piercings/jewelry must be removed for competition. This includes tongue, nose and belly button piercings.

## **MODELING**

Contestants should practice modeling in their pageant wardrobe, especially shoes. A simple small circle turn will be used while modeling both swimsuit and evening gown instead of a traditional pivot. Hands should be at the side and not placed on your hips at any time.

## **REHEARSALS AND ACTIVITIES**

A schedule, including times and locations, will be given upon arrival. Plan to always be on time. Once you are at a location, plan on staying there. Have your chaperone bring lunch and snacks. Pack a bag with items to freshen up with and a pair of slippers to give your feet a break.

*Cell phones are not allowed in the dressing room and cannot be used by contestants during rehearsals.*

## **JUDGES AND SCORING**

The judges' panel will consist of five women and men who are genuinely interested in getting to know you. They want this experience to be as enjoyable as you do. Be yourself!

Each category carries a percentage of the total score. Each category is judged and scored independently from all other categories.

For preliminaries:

- Personal interview: 35%
- Stage presence (in evening gown): 25%
- Beauty and physique (in swimsuit): 25%
- Speech and communication skills: 15%

For finals:

- Stage presence: 25%
- Beauty and physique: 25%
- Speech: 15%
- On-Stage Questions: 35%

## **CHAPERONES**

Most queens are chaperoned by their pageant director. If this is not possible, the chaperone should be at least 21 years of age. You **MUST** have a female chaperone staying in your room and should always be accompanied to and from your room. A chaperone should always be with you at rehearsals also. Exceptions are when pageant directors are in meetings or when you are at official photographs. Parents, families, and friends sometimes want to stop by and offer words of encouragement. It is recommended that “lights out” is at midnight each night. No men are permitted in the Queen’s room from midnight until 6:00 a.m.

## **PHOTOGRAPHS AND VIDEOS**

Professional group and individual pictures will be taken of you in both evening gown and swimsuit by our photographers from Studio 131 of Springfield. These are the only group pictures taken. If you order these photos, they will be available for pickup on Sunday.

Additionally, Studio 131 will take many candid photos during rehearsals and events. These photos will also be available for purchase.

Video packages are also available for the preliminaries and the finals through LaMantia Creative.

**Video cameras of any kind are not permitted during competition. Cameras to capture still moments must be used from your seats except for group photo opportunities.**

## **CROWNS AND SASHES**

Official sashes will be provided, so you will not need to bring your own. With respect to the State Queen, we ask that no other crowns or sashes are worn by any royalty. (This includes Jr. Misses, Little Misses, and Little Misters from your fair or any other pageant system.)

## **MEALS**

There will be a buffet line set up in the area outside of the ballroom for our convention. Quick snacks and drinks are available outside the restaurant on the second floor of the Crowne Plaza. Remember that this is a large convention and the hotel staff is serving many people so please be patient and courteous.

## **SCHEDULE AND ATTIRE**

### **THURSDAY- practice and pictures. First Roll call at 1:00 p.m.**

**Attire:** Arrive wearing the dress and heels that you will wear for the Sunday Night Production number. Pantyhose are not necessary.

Bring your swimsuit and taupe heels (these can be closed-toe or strappy), evening gown, heels, all accessories, jeans, your official t-shirt, comfortable shoes and socks. You may also bring your county crown and sash to have the pageant photographer take a picture to be used for your County Fair Book or other local advertising if you wish. This will be done in the Sapphire Room before the evening rehearsal. **All items must fit in a formal-length garment bag and the tote bag given to you at check-in.**

During this Orientation/First Rehearsal, you will be briefed on the complete weekend of activities, meet the crew and practice. **It is important to come to rehearsal in full make-up and with your hair done as Official Group and Individual Pictures will be taken following rehearsal.** You will have pictures taken in your swimsuit and then change clothes for official pictures in your gown. There will not be enough time to change hair or make-up so plan for this. Gowns and swimsuits worn for official pictures must be the same ones you will wear for the competition.

Pageant directors will be dismissed to attend a meeting while the contestants eat and socialize. You will practice the production number after dinner. The dance is a way to introduce the pageant to the audience and is not judged. The rehearsal will end at about 9:30.

### **FRIDAY- interviews and stage rehearsal**

#### **Interview Outfit**

- Arrive in your interview outfit. Job Interview appropriate attire
- A daytime dress, dress with jacket, skirt suit, jumpsuit, or pantsuit. The sleeve length of your outfit is required to be long sleeve, ¾ sleeve, or short sleeve.
- No capes, wraps or extra fabric draping the back of the dress
- Keep accessories to a minimum.
- High-heels at least 2 inches - no platform higher than one inch
- Taupe or black closed toe heels

This is a very busy day. In the morning, contestants who are in the “afternoon preliminary” will be interviewed while the “evening preliminary” contestants rehearse on stage. In the afternoon, the two groups will switch. Rehearsals include group and individual entrances and exits and practicing with the microphone. Heels are expected to be worn at rehearsals but you may wish to wear slippers to give your feet a break during downtime. Plan to have your chaperones pick up lunch and bring it to you at the rehearsal location. After all of the interviews are complete, you

will introduce yourself to the judges one more time. We will go to the trade show for a short time, and then you will be dismissed to have dinner with your fair board and/or family.

## **PERSONAL INTERVIEWS**

Interviews are a timed event. You will have four minutes to present yourself and your personality. You will be seated across from the panel and will be judged on your appearance, confidence, and ability to communicate effectively. This is a job interview. Sit up and do not cross your feet. Check to make sure your clothing fits correctly when you are seated, and your skirt (if wearing one) is not too tight or short. The photographer will be in the room taking pictures. If you wish for him not to be in the room, please let me know.

### **SATURDAY- preliminary competition**

The policy is to have only official crew members in the dressing room. Convention badges are required for admission to the pageant preliminaries. Limited seating near the stage has been reserved for your supporters during your competition time. Twelve reserved seating passes will be emailed to your pageant director. It is up to you and your director to determine who uses these passes. No one will be allowed in the reserved seats without a pass. There is plenty of additional seating available in the ballroom.

**Noisemakers are not allowed during competition. Posters are common, but we ask that your family and friends limit the size to no larger than an 8 ½ x 11 paper. Please have them limit the display to when you are actually on stage.** A professional photographer and videographer will have photos and videos of the competition for sale. Please remember that everyone has a queen on stage and be courteous to the people around you.

## **STAGE PRESENCE**

- Evening Gown
  - The gown needs to be full length, with no high low hem line, and slits no further than 5 inches above the top of your knee (be mindful of your queen's height when making this decision). No U slits/rounded cut out slits allowed.
  - Dress SHOULD NOT touch the ground when bustled.
  - 5 bustles total - this means, for example 5 strings/hooks attaching to 5 buttons. Anything more will disqualify contestant from competing in the evening gown portion of the pageant.
  - If there is nude mesh on front or sides of your dress it needs to be backed by fabric the same color as the dress (cleavage area to bust line can be nude but past the bust line needs to be covered with fabric the same color as the dress).
  - Choose accessories that enhance your look and do not overwhelm you. Do not wear gloves.

- Shoes should blend in with the dress. NO platforms higher than one inch.

This phase of the competition is designed for you to make an on-stage statement of your personality, poise, and confidence. Choose a gown that makes you feel like a Queen and meets the listed requirements.

Try on your gown the week before the pageant for a final fitting. This will help prevent surprises in Springfield.

## **BEAUTY AND PHYSIQUE**

In this phase of the competition, the judges are looking for good posture, energy, confidence, toning and overall appearance. One-piece, solid-colored swimsuits are required. Many contestants choose a “pageant swimsuit”. These often have more structure than swimsuits off the rack. Make sure your swimsuit meets the following guidelines:

- Swimsuit
  - Make sure your suit fits and is long enough for your body. The lower portion of the suit should cover the hip bones in the front at a minimum, and completely cover your bottom.
  - All swimsuits need to be fully lined so the butt glue sticks - make sure to practice this at home.
  - Need elastic around butt and legs if custom made.
  - High-heeled (at least 2 inches) taupe shoes are to be worn during this portion of the competition. Shoes can be closed-toe pumps or strappy. If they are strappy, the shoe must be secured by a strap around the back of the foot or ankle. Please make sure they are taupe and not ivory or bronze. NO platforms higher than one inch.
  - Accents and minimal bling are okay. Example: metal ring at the waist where the material is gathered.
  - Stud earrings are allowed but must fit the earlobe with nothing hanging over the earlobe - round or square stud style are allowed. (Example: If a tear drop style hangs below the earlobe, this is not allowed). No other jewelry is to be worn.
  - No undergarments or pantyhose may be worn under swimsuit during this portion of the competition.
  - Tattoos must be covered.



## **SPEECH AND COMMUNICATION SKILLS**

- Speech Outfit
  - Wear a business dress or skirt suit. No pants or cocktail dresses.
  - No capes, wraps or extra fabric draping or hanging from the back of the dress.
  - Short sleeve or longer required - no sleeveless, cap sleeve, off shoulder, one shoulder, tank style, spaghetti strap, or strapless.
  - Taupe or black pumps or taupe strappy heels only. If they are strappy, the shoe must be secured by a strap around the back of the foot or ankle. No embellishments on shoes or colored shoes - NO platforms higher than one inch.
  - Small earrings allowed.

You will be presenting a TIMED one-minute speech on a topic of your choice. Going over the time limit will result in a reduction of points. Choose a topic that interests you or a story you want to share. You will be judged more on the presentation of your speech than the topic. Stories from the internet, singing, poems, props and AI generated speeches are NOT allowed. The queen must be comfortable speaking and expressing herself naturally.

### ***SUNDAY- final rehearsal and pageant***

**Morning attire:** Casual or fun outfit. Can be pants, a jumpsuit, or a dress. NO JEANS OR SWEATS. This is a final rehearsal for CONTESTANTS ONLY.

**Pageant attire:** Production number dress you selected. Accessories needed are closed toe or strappy taupe heels (no platforms higher than one inch) and earrings of your choice. Earrings must be 3" or less in length. No watch, necklace, or anklet.

The evening will begin with the production number and introductions. The top 16 finalists will be announced, non-finalist awards will then be given, and the remaining contestants will be seated as a group in reserved seats for the rest of the competition. **NO EXCEPTIONS.** Contestants will change into their evening gowns for the grand finale.

The finalist's scores will start back at zero, and they will compete in all phases of the competition again except for the interview. They will also answer 3 on-stage interview questions. These questions are the same for all finalists.

After the grand finale and the retiring queen's farewell/last walk, the 4<sup>th</sup>, 3<sup>rd</sup>, 2<sup>nd</sup>, and 1<sup>st</sup> runners-up and the new Miss Illinois County Fair Queen will be announced. Please plan to move out to the picture area following the coronation for pictures and to congratulate the new queen.

Sunday evening one of you lucky ladies will be the 64th Miss Illinois County Fair Queen! Being the state queen is a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity and your year as Miss Illinois County Fair will be unlike any other job you will have.

As Miss Illinois County Fair Queen, you will be required to sign a contract.. The contract reiterates the general rules and includes statements attesting that you are of good moral character

and will act in a manner befitting a queen. It also outlines your role and relationships with the Illinois Association of Agricultural Fairs, the Illinois Department of Agriculture, and the State Pageant Director. In general, the contract will include the following points you will agree to:

- Upon being crowned Miss Illinois County Fair Queen, I have in essence relinquished my crown as my title of Miss \_\_\_\_\_ Fair Queen. From this point forward, I will be known as the 2025 Miss Illinois County Fair Queen.
- I must arrange my schedule to serve as the official hostess of the 2025 Illinois State Fair staying on the grounds with a designated chaperone. I will also attend the DuQuoin State Fair for a minimum of two days.
- I will be employed by the Illinois Department of Agriculture and will travel throughout the state during the summer to attend fairs, pageants, and various other promotional events scheduled by the State Director.
- Any appearances as Miss Illinois County Fair Queen will be scheduled by or approved by the State Director. The Director will choose and designate my chaperone at all appearances.
- As a representative of the Illinois Association of Agricultural Fairs, I will conduct myself with the utmost decorum at all appearances as Miss Illinois County Fair Queen: including refraining from smoking and drinking alcoholic beverages.
- Any photo sessions and pictures released in the role of Miss Illinois County Fair Queen will be approved by the State Director.
- That if any of the representations made by me are false or in the event of my marriage or any other reason that would keep me from fulfilling my duties as Miss Illinois County Fair Queen; I will upon request of the State Director immediately relinquish my title, crown, privileges, and all gifts, cash or otherwise, and be succeeded by a runner-up.

I hope that you found this packet of information helpful. If you have any questions or concerns, please email or call me. Remember this is a once-in-a-lifetime weekend. No matter the outcome, I hope you leave with new friends, great memories, and an experience you will carry with you for the rest of your life. You will arrive as a Queen and go home a Queen!

I am excited to see you in January!

Sandy Hoke, State Pageant Director  
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