

Iowa State Fair Fabric & Threads Panel Discussion

April 2023

Participants: Anna, Superintendent of Fabric & Threads competition at the Iowa State Fair; chapter members Beth, Nancy, Diane, Vicky and Rita

Q: When you make an item, do you know you will enter it into the fair, or do you decide after it's made?

A: Nancy: I once made a beautiful piece but there was no category for it, so it didn't get judged. Check the categories first when planning.

A: Beth: Categories exist for kids, home dec, embroidery, accessories, etc. Don't overlook those even though they are not garments. When I start a garment I intend to enter into the fair competition, I put more "oomph" into it, but not all turn out fair worthy.

A: Diane: Add piping, Hong Kong finished seams and other special details to give an item visual impact. I don't plan ahead and don't always expect everything to win, but I fill out the 10 tickets with items from my closet.

A: Vicky: I don't always know what I'm taking until the night before. Ten tickets cost the same as 1.

Q: Do garments have to be perfect?

A: Vicky: It depends on the boo-boo. You'll see it but the judge may not.

A: Diane: I once entered a vintage inspired wool coat, and accidentally cut a hole in it while sewing. I patched the coat and entered it; the coat placed 3rd with a comment about the great repair.

A: Beth shared two shirts: one won and the other didn't. Why? We don't always know. It's one person's opinion at one point in time.

Q: Are entries judged by one person or a group?

A: Anna: One person, and it's a new person this year.

Q: Are there new categories or any classes being retired this year?

A: Anna: Not for garments. They have made changes to knitting and another category, but not to garments this year. Everything that is entered gets displayed.

Q: Are garment judges supposed to know about fashion or just construction?

A: Anna: Both will be taken into account with this new judge.

A: Beth: Press and wash items before submitting.

A: Diane: Lint roll the cat hair—inside, too!

Q: Do judges provide public comments?

A: Anna: No. Judging is closed with written comments only.

A: Beth: Tags are folded in so the judge can't see names. At pick-up you receive your comment sheets.

Q. Why do knitted items have more classes than crochet? Why is Tunesian not represented at all?

A: Anna: Ask! Email me with suggestions. For every category added, one must be eliminated (across all of Fabric & Threads). There are a fixed number of available categories. Submit new category requests before the end of February. I am working on gathering a history of what categories are most and least popular.

Q: Can Fabric & Threads be moved to a more visible location?

A: Anna: Currently Fabric & Threads is in the Varied Industries Building, upstairs and in the two downstairs rooms. This building is climate controlled and more secure than other locations. The fair is working on better signage and visibility.

Q: What should I expect when delivering entries?

A: Anna: Entries are due 2 weeks before the fair starts. Your entry packet will contain tags and details about dropoff. Order tags May 1-July 1 at IowaStateFair.org. Order 10 tags even if you don't think you'll use them all—10 costs the same as 1.

Saturday, July 29, 2023 is drop off day. Park right at the south side of the building. Volunteers will be there checking in entries.

The judging process takes one week. The first two days quilts are judged, because they take the most time to display. Then crochet, then knitting, and clothing are judged last.

The fair does not plan to bring back preview night.

Pick up entries the Monday after the fair from noon to 6 p.m. Take a number, and a volunteer will take you around to fetch all your entries from where they were displayed. If someone else is picking up for you, not that on your entry sheet or call/email prior to pick-up day. Items can also be mailed to you.

Additional comments:

Rita: Take a photo of everything you enter each year to remember what you brought and to remember what has already been submitted.

Nancy: The inside needs to look as good as the outside. Items must make a good first impression.

Fair ribbons: one blue (1st), one red (2nd), one white (3rd), sometimes pink (4th). Unlimited Honorable Mentions. Sweepstakes ribbon goes to the person with at least one blue ribbon and the most premium.

Members who need help dropping off or picking up entries may contact the Board to find someone who can do this for them.

Nancy: Entering items in the fair competitions is an incentive to sew well and challenge yourself.

Rosanne: Suggest a comment box or way to email category ideas, suggestions, etc. Anna replied that a QR code and box for paper suggestions will return to the fair.

To volunteer to help with check in/check out, email Anna (annapilcher23@gmail.com).