

After missing the N.C. State Fair and the N.C. Mountain State Fair for a year, what a welcome sight it was to see so many people return to the fairgrounds and enjoy themselves. It was a great year for both fairs and it would be appropriate to say both exceeded our expectations.

I was touched that so many people personally thanked me for holding the fairs this year. It made me realize just what an important tradition it is for so many North Carolinians. That was especially true at the Century Farm Family Reunion held at the State Fair, which honors families that have maintained continuous family ownership of their farms for 100 years or more.

We had nearly 1,700 people attend this year's reunion and you can see photos from it on page 4 of this paper.

It takes a team effort to put on events as large as the State Fair and the Mountain State Fair and I am incredibly proud of our staff with the N.C. Department of Agriculture and Consumer Services for stepping up in a big way to make sure these events happened.

Putting on the largest event in the state wasn't without challenges. Like most businesses, we faced challenges; challenges with hiring, challenges getting enough tents and the uncertainty of whether people would turn out for the event. But it came together and people supported it.

I am grateful, too, for the many sponsors who supported the fair – some for the first time. Through their generous support, financially and through volunteers, we were able to continue to provide great programming and competitions such as the Field of Dreams, Junior Livestock Sale of Champions and scholarships for participating youth, Century Farm Reunion, the Got to Be NC Pavilion, musical stages, pig races and grounds entertainment and more.

Through new sponsorships, we were able to host our first accessAbility Day presented by Bandwidth, expand the activities and entertainment in the State Fair Forest presented by Enviva, showcase North Carolina musical talent on the Waterfall Stage powered by Curtis Media, expand the new Got to be NC Pavilion in Dorton Arena presented by Agri Supply and continue the tradition of giving back to the community through Smithfield Foods Hunger Relief Day.

Thank you to all our sponsors and thank you to all the fairgoers who showed their support by showing up. We are already busy planning for 2022 and hope to have even bigger and better fairs in 2022.