Fifth Third Bank Michigan State Fair posts 22% gain in attendance, returns more than 400K to Community Organizations for 2015

Novi, MI: Fair skies and warm summer days helped boost attendance for the **2015 Fifth Third Bank Michigan State Fair,** which posted significant gains in attendance, with more than 112,000 folks enjoying the expansion of the fairgrounds at the **Suburban Collection Showplace** in Novi. The 22% overall increase in attendance was bolstered by much larger crowds each day of the four day event, as thousands of Michigan families enjoyed the new Equine Pavilion and Ram Truck Test Drive Experience plus larger Shrine Circus and Arnold Amusements Midway, all spread across the 43 acres the Suburban Collection Showplace has acquired since 2013, to accommodate the Michigan State Fair. Inside the show hall, livestock, home arts and agriculture exhibits also increased by nearly 25%.

"Following the Fair this year, 2015, the Fifth Third Bank Michigan State Fair is returning more than $400,000 in contributions to a wide spectrum of community organizations, up from greater than $300,000 last year," says **Blair Bowman, Owner of the Suburban Collection Showplace** and **Michigan State Fair, LLC**, "We are deeply grateful for the enormous groundswell of community support and enthusiasm we are enjoying for the State Fair, and delighted to be able to in turn provide financial support to non-profit organizations across the Metro Detroit area."

The **Children's Charity State Fair Preview Party** on Thursday August 28 drew an estimated 5500 Michigan family members involved with local non-profit organizations such as the **Rainbow Connection, Make-A-Wish Foundation, Special Olympics** and **Shriners Children's Hospitals**, as well as active military and veterans. This year the State Fair made a broader community outreach for this very special, invitation-only, free event, and welcomed roughly 30% more fairgoers over last year.

Urban and **Rural Agriculture Scholarship** awards increased from $20,000 in 2014 to $40,000 for 2014, with a total of 51 recipients, these scholarship programs are made possible through the dedicated support of State Fair sponsors **Bright House Networks**, **C.F. Burger Creamery**, **Fifth Third Bank**, the **Detroit Shriners**, **Kroger of Michigan** and **Guernsey Farms Dairy**. Michigan State Fair Gold Ribbon Scholarship Recipients had all received at least one blue ribbon from their local County Fair, and were also reviewed on the basis of their academic and community involvement. Urban Scholars were considered based on their contribution to Agriculture and food education in cities with populations greater that 30,000. Names and cities of all 2015 Fifth Third Bank Michigan State Fair Scholars follow. The attached images are from their visit to the state Capitol on Thursday September 24, where they were recognized for their achievements by both the Senate, courtesy of Senator Mike Kowall, and the House of Representatives, courtesy of Rep. Kathy Crawford.

The Fifth Third Bank Michigan State Fair Superstar Competition welcomed it's second grand prize winner over the weekend, **Carly Bins, 16, of Northville**, and also launched the debut EP from 2014 Superstar Alison Albrecht, of Birmingham, who signed autographs for several hundred well-wishers at a special event on the Midway Friday evening.

A new **Honored Citizens Day** program and activities debuted on Friday, September 4, welcoming all those 65 years of age and older to the State Fair, free of charge, and providing box lunches and refreshments, courtesy of St. Johns Providence Health Systems. Buses ferrying seniors from across Southeast Michigan queued up outside the Suburban Collection Showplace, and multi-generations of Michigan families enjoying the Fair together were also very much in evidence. The Honored Michigan Citizens for 2015 were **Marv Gans,** Northville, **Florence Baptist,** Novi, **Marion Cowan,** Northville, and **Barb Lewis**, Novi, and the grand prize for best essay describing a Michigan State Fair memory was awarded to **Judith Lewis Hansel,** of Canton.

Two exciting new State Fair features also launched on Monday, September 7, the First Annual **State Fair Parade** along Grand River in Novi welcomed more than 350 participants from across Southeast Michigan, anchored by the Detroit Shiners mobile brigade, and the **Michigan Mega Jam**, presented by the Metro Times, which offered an All-Star band of luminaries paying tribute to decades of Michigan hits, including **Jill Jack, Thornetta Davis, Nadir Omowale, Tosha Owens, Sean Blackman, Brandon Calhoon, Caleb Gutierrez, Jorg Kerasiotis, Steffanie Christi'an and Alison Albrecht,** backed by the stellar **St. Cecilia (Todd Glass, James Simonson, Brett Lucas)** with very special guest **Chris Codish** on keyboards, along with **Dezi Magby**, DJ Psycho of the Detroit Techno Militia.

www.MichiganStateFairLLC.com.

For additional information, interviews or hi-res Fair images, please contact Nancy Schoenheide-Phares, 248.486.3424 nphares@michiganstatefairllc.com

Urban Agriculture Scholarship Recipients (no particular order):
Christopher Lara, Cadillac Urban Garden, Southwest Detroit
Paulina Torres-Guzman, Cadillac Urban Garden, Southwest Detroit
Diego Barajas, Cadillac Urban Garden, Southwest Detroit
Heather Gregory,Tollgate Farms, Novi
Gwendolyn Klenke, Sun,Water & Seeds 4H Club,Novi
Alana Hutka, Sun,Water & Seeds 4H Club, Novi
Aaron Hutka, Sun,Water & Seeds 4H Club,Novi
Ethan Bush, Sun,Water & Seeds 4H Club, Farmington Hills
Declan Bush, Sun,Water & Seeds 4H Club, Farmington Hills
Susanna Khanuk, Sun,Water & Seeds 4H Club, Novi
Tyler Chatman, Earthworks, Detroit
Anthony Morgan, Earthworks, Detroit
Aalia Muhammad, Earthworks, Detroit
Danzy Family Youth, Earthworks, Detroit
Chelsea Best, Putnan Community Garden,Pinckney
Tierra Modock, Brightmoor Youth Garden, Detroit
Alkesha Griffin, Oakland Avenue Urban Farm, Detroit
May Nixon, Oakland Avenue Urban Farm, Detroit
Christopher Griffin, Oakland Avenue Urban Farm, Detroit
Carlee Brown, Oakland Avenue Urban Farm, Detroit
Jade Mathis, Oakland Avenue Urban Farm, Detroit
My'Kel Allix, Ohana Gardens, Highland Park
Destiny Sills, Ohana Gardens, Highland Park
Anna Measom, Springwater Lane Garden, West Bloomfield

Rural Gold Ribbon Scholarship Recipients, with County of origin (alphabetical order):

Home Arts/Agriculture:

Lydia Davenport, Gratiot
Hunter Divert, Monroe
Greta Gmazel,Ingham
Megan Guettler, Bay
Megan Heydlauff, Washtenaw
Camille Kowalski, Oakland
Kelsey Layman, Oakland
Karlie Lokuta, Monroe
Jessica Marimpietri, Monroe
Olivia Omer, Ingham
Alexandra Reau, Monroe
Blaise Rhein, Oakland
Lauren Ringewold, Barry
Kelsey Yarger, Monroe

Livestock/Equine:

Ciara Allen, Jackson
Lauren Bickel, Lapeer
Jaycie Brown, Livingston
Brad Chapman, Monroe
Laura Coon,Ionia
Mackenzie Delong, Macomb
Kendra Merriman, Kent
Ethan Plank, Hillsdale
Madalin Roberts, Oakland
Taylor Walker, Monroe
Tara Wilson, Oakland
Tom Purves, Oakland