

THE GREAT PICTURE HUNT



Seth Boyle, 12, bonds with his goat, Tyson, before the pair enter the show ring at a county fair.
PHOTO BY DAVE LABELLE

NIKON D800, 180mm lens
ISO 800, f/2.8 at 1/250

Kids, Animals and Fairs

I love county fairs. They are like giant aquariums with all kinds and shapes of humans swimming about talking, spending money and munching everything edible on a stick. Folks seem more relaxed and less concerned with appearances.

A county fair is one of the few places these days where you can sit on a bench with a camera and watch humanity parade past and, for the most part, those passing don't notice you or don't care.



Renowned author, photographer and lecturer **Dave LaBelle** has captured special moments for more than half a century. For more of his writings,

visit davidlabelle.com and bridgesandangels.wordpress.com.

PRO CAMERA TIP

When shopping for a lens, invest in one with an aperture of f/2.8. It costs more than a lens with an aperture of f/3.5 or f/4, but it is worth it—especially if you like making pictures indoors or in dimly lit places. Many of my pictures are made with a Nikkor/Nikon 180mm lens. When shooting with a Canon, my favorite lens is a 200mm.

My signature pictures are about relationships. I prefer observing and watching for storytelling moments rather than posing people, as studio photographers do. You might say I am drawn to “Old Dogs, Children and Watermelon Wine,” a song written and performed by the late Tom T. Hall.

There are few better places to capture Americana than a county fair. Amidst the colorful

characters, games and rides, I find myself gravitating to the livestock pens and show arenas to watch young people interact with their animals.

I suspect there are reasons for this. I was once a child with a yard full of dogs, cats, pigs, cows, chickens, pigeons, frogs, hawks and even a pet raccoon.

I remember what it was like to love and even lose an animal.

Animals don't care if they look “just right.” They are not embarrassed to relieve themselves publicly. Likewise, children are generally less pretentious and, unlike most adults, usually are not afraid to show their emotions—at least not until they reach that age where everyone and everything embarrasses them, and they learn to hide their feelings. ■

Reader Challenge

Watch for young people petting or talking to their animals at a fair, farm or show. Make a natural, heartwarming, storytelling photograph.

Though not always necessary, seeing the eyes and/or expressions on the faces of the humans and animals connects us more quickly.

A lens of 100mm or greater allows you to get reasonably close and eliminate unwanted, show-stealing backgrounds, while not interrupting precious moments between people and animals.

Email your best image (just one, please) with caption information, including an explanation of how it affects you, to GPH@pur.coop. We may share submissions on our website and social media channels.