

Santa Clara County Fairgrounds Welcomes Salene Duarte as New Executive Director

Lifelong Fairgrounds Enthusiast and Leader Vows to Enhance Community Engagement and Create Lasting Memories for All Visitors

SAN JOSE, CA, UNITED STATES, June 12, 2025 /EINPresswire.com/ -- The Santa Clara County Fairgrounds Management Corporation (SCCFMC) has appointed Salene Duarte as its new Executive Director. Duarte, a lifelong enthusiast of the Fairgrounds and an experienced leader, previously served as the Santa Clara County Fair Manager until June 2024. She was then appointed Co-Interim Director alongside Armando Carlos. Her permanent role as Executive Director officially began on June 1, 2025.



Salene Duarte stands behind one of the fair mascots from the mid-80's. Photo courtesy of Karl Mondon, Bay Area News Group

SCCFMC Board Chair Vicky Bosworth made the announcement: "Salene's deep-rooted passion for the Fairgrounds is evident through her history as a dedicated 4-H member, an active participant in Future Farmers of America, and a committed leader and volunteer. She brings a wealth of experience, a clear vision for the future, and an open mind ready to embrace new ideas. We are confident that Salene will be an invaluable asset to our organization, and we look forward to the innovative direction she will lead us in."

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My vision is to create a place where others can build lasting memories...a welcoming home for our community, a hub where everyone can celebrate in a way that's meaningful and memorable to them.”

Salene Duarte

Born and raised in Campbell, Duarte's agricultural roots run deep, stretching all the way back to the early 1800s when her ancestors immigrated from Switzerland and

settled as dairymen near Mt. Shasta. Her mother's family owned and operated a trucking

business in Campbell, hauling fruits, nuts, and vegetables throughout what was then known as the Valley of the Heart's Delight. Duarte herself joined the 4-H club as a young girl, showing her first sheep at just nine years old. As a high school member of the Future Farmers of America, she won her first Grand Champion title with her steer, Shiloh. Today, she and her husband, a high school agriculture teacher, run a 100-acre cattle operation in the East Foothills of San Jose, focusing on raising and selling high-quality show calves to local youth for county fairgrounds competitions.

Over the years, as a Fairgrounds volunteer and consultant, Duarte held many roles in Fairgrounds operations, including reviewing and formatting entry books, overseeing barn layouts, managing livestock operations, organizing Home Arts exhibits, and coordinating awards and judging. During the COVID-19 pandemic in 2020, she helped transition the Fair to a virtual format, ensuring the continuation of livestock judging, Home Arts exhibitions, and heritage displays through digital platforms.

Duarte was appointed Fair Manager in 2021, where she worked to revitalize the Fairgrounds by introducing youth and open livestock shows, reactivating underutilized spaces, and leading the return of a 10-day County Fair in 2023—the first in over 20 years. Under her leadership, the Fairgrounds expanded its agriculture education programming to include livestock exhibits, competitive displays, historical presentations, and the establishment of the Junior Livestock Auction Buyers Coalition, further strengthening community engagement and participation. In addition to her role as Fairgrounds Executive Director, Duarte is also the current Vice President of the Santa Clara County Cattlewomen and works closely with the City of San Jose to ensure local youth have access to animal housing at Emma Prusch Park.

When asked what she loves most about the Fairgrounds, Duarte's response is simple: "the smile on people's faces as they enjoy the magic of this place." As Executive Director, "My vision is to



Salene Duarte at Junior Livestock Exhibition, 2024
Santa Clara County Fair

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SANTA CLARA COUNTY FAIRGROUNDS
MANAGEMENT CORPORATION

Santa Clara County Fairgrounds Logo

create a place where others can build lasting memories like I did. I remember the nerves and excitement of showing my first lamb and the pride I felt when my steer won champion honors—a moment I'll never forget. That's what I want to offer: a welcoming home for our community, a hub where everyone can celebrate what matters to them—through festivals, expos, sports, and more—in a way that's meaningful and memorable."

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About Santa Clara County Fairgrounds:

The Santa Clara County Fairgrounds is a premier destination for family fun and community engagement. Spanning 167,000 square feet indoors and 150 acres of outdoor space, the venue hosts a variety of events, including the Santa Clara County Fair, San Jose Fair Downs OTB, Fairgrounds Bingo, and numerous multicultural celebrations. The Fairgrounds serves as a community hub emphasizing inclusivity through educational experiences and diverse events. Owned by the County of Santa Clara and managed by the nonprofit Santa Clara County Fairgrounds Management Corporation, the Fairgrounds aims to promote local culture and support community spirit while preserving agricultural traditions and supporting agricultural education. For more information, visit <https://www.thefairgrounds.org/>.

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