

## **MSF County Fair Talent Contest - Overview**

The MSF County Fair Talent Contest is the culmination of talent contests held at county fairs throughout the summer in Minnesota. Each County Fair Talent Contest winner in each competition age division (preteen, teen and open) is invited to participate in the MSF County Fair Talent Contest, held at the Minnesota State Fair during the run of the fair. There, County Fair Talent Contest winners from all over the state compete against each other for nightly and overall prizes. Nightly semifinals winners in each division go on to compete against other nightly winners at the MSF County Fair Finals for the overall MSF County Fair title. The top two winners in each division of the MSF County Fair Finals then go on to compete in the finals competition in the Minnesota State Fair Amateur Talent Contest.

### **The Contact**

In March, an invitation to participate is sent to all County Fair Secretaries and Talent Contest Coordinators. This letter contains a reservation form which, when returned, informs the Minnesota State Fair which county fairs intend to participate in the MSF County Fair Talent Contest. When the reservation form is returned, the County Fair Talent Contest Coordinator receives all the necessary forms required to participate in the MSF County Fair Talent Contest. The most important of which are the winner information sheets. These sheets are used by the County Fairs to inform the Minnesota State Fair of the names of those winners representing their County in the MSF County Fair Talent Contest.

From then on, the Minnesota State Fair schedules the County Fair winners for their appearance at the State Fair. Contestants are scheduled as soon as the State Fair office receives the winner sheets from the County Fair coordinators. **Contestants will be notified by mail of their scheduled appearance date.**

### **The Contest**

All first place winners of county fair talent contests are eligible to compete in the MSF County Fair Talent Contest. **Once the attached winner information sheet is received from the county fair coordinator, the Minnesota State Fair schedules each winner's appearance.** The MSF County Fair Talent Contest is held the first ten evenings of the Minnesota State Fair on the Baldwin Park stage at **7:00 p.m.** Preteen division competition is August 27-29 and September 2-4. Teen division competition is August 27-Sept. 1, and Open division competes August 30-Sept. 4.

One winner and one runner up in each division are chosen nightly and receive a cash prize. The nightly winners in each division go on to compete in the MSF County Fair Talent Contest Finals on Saturday, September 5. First, second and third place winners are chosen in each division on finals night. Finals winners receive cash and trophies. First and second place in each division from the finals go on to compete in the Minnesota State Fair Amateur Talent Contest Finals held on Sunday, September 6 at 7:30 p.m. in the Grandstand.

### **For More Information:**

Please call Shannon Buchda at the Minnesota State Fair  
651-288-4395 or email: [msfent@mnstatefair.org](mailto:msfent@mnstatefair.org)

# 2026 MSF County Fair Talent Contest

## Rules and Information

**PLEASE NOTE: Regardless of the rules used at the originating county fair, all advancing acts must comply with the following:**

### **GENERAL RULES**

**County Representation:** Contestants may represent only one county in the MSF County Fair Talent Contest. Should a contestant win more than one county fair contest, they must choose which county they will represent. The other county may send their second-place winner as a substitute. Contestants who win first place in multiple county fairs may only appear once at the State Fair. Contestants may represent only one county fair regardless of the division in which they competed. The rules state each act may appear only once. (An act is defined as the same person or configuration of people.)

**Eligibility:** Contestants must win a county fair talent contest to participate. The contest is open to all amateur entertainers. Professionals are NOT permitted to compete. This includes Union musicians and anyone whose principal source of income is from their talent. Compensation for performing at weddings, etc. does not constitute principal source of income.

There is no fee to enter this contest. Contestants are responsible for State Fair admission and parking fees.

**Appearances:** An individual may only compete once throughout the semifinals competition. A contestant may not perform "solo" and participate as part of a group during semifinals or finals. Contestants are allowed to also participate in the MSF Amateur Talent Contest, but they may only qualify for the Finals competition with one performance.

**Past Winners:** Except for previous 1<sup>st</sup> Place Open Division winners, acts that have participated in the past are welcome to compete again. 2025 Preteen and Teen 1<sup>st</sup> Place Division winners are ineligible to compete in 2026. After a one-year hiatus, former Teen Division first place winners are required to compete in the Open Division. Former Preteen first place winners must also compete in the Open Division if they are not of age to compete in the Teen Division.

**Divisions:** All acts compete in one of three different divisions, based on the age of the contestant at the County Fair contest date. Each act must compete in the same age division as at the County Fair contest unless act does not comply with MSF age requirements.

- **The Preteen Division** is open to contestants age 12 and under only.
- **The Teen Division** is open to contestants ages 13 through 18 only.
- **The Open Division** is open to any contestant, regardless of age.
- In cases where the act consists of a group of people, choose the division that is appropriate for the majority of the group members.
- Accompanists, when not a part of the act, may be any age.

**Accompaniment:** You will be required to use a provided MSF USB Drive for prerecorded accompaniment. Further information and instructions regarding the flash drive will be included with the contestant's performance confirmation packet. Vocalists may use recorded accompaniment, provided it contains instrumental accompaniment ONLY; absolutely no vocals are allowed on the recording. For vocal acts, contestants will be disqualified if accompaniment recording has vocals of any kind. ***NO iPods, iPads or cell phones are allowed for accompaniment recordings.***

**Check-in Meeting:** All acts are required to attend a check-in meeting immediately behind the Baldwin Park Stage at **6:00 p.m.** on the night they are scheduled to perform. This meeting is mandatory and will last approximately 15 minutes. If the contestant does not attend the meeting, the contestant will not be allowed to perform. **Contestants who are using prerecorded accompaniment will need to bring the provided MSF USB Drive with them at this time.**

**Judging: Judges' decisions are final, and scores are not released to contestants or the public.**

Contestants will be judged on:

- quality of performance (including selection)
- stage presence
- entertainment value

**Selection:** All contestants must perform the same act or musical selection as used to win their county fair contest.

**Sound:** All contestants are required to use the sound system provided by the Minnesota State Fair. A sound technician is provided. The State Fair will also provide microphones, monitors, and a piano. All other instruments and amplifiers must be provided by the contestant. The State Fair does not allow microphones supplied by the act.

**Time Limit:** The time limit is four minutes and points will be deducted for contestants going over the limit. Musical groups and vocalists are allowed to perform a medley of tunes but must remain within the four-minute time limit.

## **GENERAL INFORMATION**

**Admission & Parking:** The Minnesota State Fair operates an "All Pay Gate" policy. Contestants are responsible for gate admission and parking fees. Advance discount admission tickets can be purchased from participating Cub Foods Stores throughout Minnesota through August 26. Free parking and bus service is also available through the State Fair Park & Ride system.

**Schedule:** Competition takes place at **7:00 p.m.** nightly, **Thursday, Aug. 27 through Saturday, Sept. 5** at the Minnesota State Fair Baldwin Park Stage. The stage is a covered outdoor facility, measuring 32 feet wide and 20 feet deep with a wood floor. Dressing rooms **ARE NOT** available for contestants.

### **Semifinals:**

- Preteen Division competition is Aug. 27 through Aug. 29 and Sept. 2 through Sept. 4.
- Teen Division competition runs Aug. 27 through Sept. 1.
- Open Division competition is Aug. 30 through Sept. 4.

Each night of semifinals one finalist and one runner-up are selected from each competing division. **Finalists will advance to compete in the County Fair Talent Contest Finals on Saturday, September 5.**

**Finals:** Finals for all divisions are at **7:00 p.m. Saturday, Sept. 5** at the Baldwin Park Stage. Six acts from each division will compete for trophies and cash prizes. The first and second place act of each division in the County Fair Talent Contest Finals will compete in the MSF Amateur Talent Contest Finals at **7:30 p.m. Sunday, September 6** in the Grandstand.

**Bands/Heavy Equipment:** If you have band gear or heavy equipment to load in, you must call us to make arrangements. Please call (651) 288-4398 Monday through Friday between 8 a.m. and 5 p.m. **This call must be made at least a week in advance of your appearance.**

## **AWARDS**

### **Semifinals:**

**Open:** Nightly winners receive \$100 and advance to the finals Sept. 5; first runners-up receive \$50.

**Teen:** Nightly winners receive \$50 and advance to the finals Sept. 5; first runners-up receive \$25.

**Preteen:** Nightly winners receive \$50 and advance to the finals Sept. 5; first runners-up receive \$25.

### **Finals:**

First, second and third place winners in each division receive trophies in addition to the cash prizes listed below.

**Open Division Finals:** First place receives \$375; second place receives \$275; third place receives \$175.

**Teen Division Finals:** First place receives \$100; second place receives \$75; third place receives \$50.

**Preteen Division Finals:** First place receives \$100; second place receives \$75; third place receives \$50.

First and second place winners from the finals in each division receive the opportunity to compete as a finalist in the MSF Amateur Talent Contest Finals, held at **7:30 p.m. Sunday, Sept. 6** in the Grandstand.

## **QUESTIONS**

If you have any questions, please call **651-288-4398** or email **msfent@mnstatefair.org**.