



KEVIN BOTTRELL/Colby Free Press

Jimmy Campbell (above, from left) harmonized with Blake and Brandon McLemore while performing on stage with their band, Driven. Fiddler Rachel Johnson (right) with the Darin and Brooke Aldridge band laughed as she played Saturday.



Bluegrass festival sees record crowd

By Kevin Bottrell
Colby Free Press
kbottrell@nwkansas.com

More than 900 people braved 100-degree temperatures to attend three days of bluegrass concerts last weekend at the Pickin' on the Plains festival at the Thomas County Fairgrounds.

Musician and festival organizer Susan McLemore said there were a lot of newcomers. Attendance was up 25 percent from last year. Many were fans of headline band Dailey and Vincent, she said, who were thrilled to find a concert close enough to get to.

McLemore said her son Brandon, who plays in the bluegrass band Driven, spoke to some visitors who were traveling on I-70, heard the radio announcement for the festival and ended up staying all weekend.

McLemore said there were visitors from many different states as well as South Africa and Germany.

Representatives from the Kansas Department of Wildlife, Parks and Tourism also paid a visit to the festival. A "driving billboard" for the Faces and Places Tour stopped at the fairgrounds Saturday evening. Two department volunteers were taking pictures of local people alongside their painted sport utility vehicle. The pictures will go up on Facebook, Twitter and other social media to promote tourism events in Kansas.

McLemore said the bands enjoyed playing



This sour-looking goat was part of the petting zoo operated by the Ziegelmeier family.

at the concert. Dailey and Vincent in particular told her they want to come back.

The free workshops were also popular, she said. More than 30 people came to the vocal workshop taught by professional musicians Darin and Brooke Aldridge.

McLemore said many of the people at the festival were impressed by the events for kids, which included arts and crafts, face painting and a petting zoo run by the Ziegelmeier family. The kids especially enjoyed the horseback rides, she said.



KATHRYN BALLARD/Colby Free Press
Headline band Dailey and Vincent (above left) brought in a large part of the increased attendance. The band said they enjoyed playing here and want to return next year. Also new to Pickin' on the Plains this year were the Treblemakers (left), a Kansas Bluegrass Association youth band. To help the audience beat the heat, the festival organizers set up a mist system fed by hoses, which sent a cool water mist over the seats. Temperatures on Friday got up to 98, while Saturday and Sunday got up to 103 degrees.