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**AUG 09 2017**

**Ravalli County Commissioners**

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Hello Darlene,

I have taken the time to discuss with our committee whether we choose to remain with the Ravalli County Fair, or to say good bye. We have been with the fair for more than 10 years. It has been our only source of income for our cub scout program. Getting into the fair was very difficult for us. We were faced with many obstacles. With each new director that has come to the Fair, we have done our best to adjust to the growing pains that naturally come with the process. But the last three years have been exceptionally difficult with the lack of communication and disregard for our simple needs. I do not care to list each issue that we have faced, but I can if the board would be interested. It has been a very difficult decision, but our conscience cannot allow us to support the fair any longer.

We do not support the board's requirement to have an electronic accounting turned in every night. We understand the desire to accept credit cards at the gate. That seems like a good idea. However, to require the small, non-profits to do the same is not a good idea. We know how hard everyone works the week of the fair. We call it our six-day marathon. Two days for prep and the remaining four for the obvious. My husband and I are there every morning by 8:30, prepping for the day and we don't get home till after 11 every night. I am sure that others have told you similar schedules. Yes, we give up a week's worth of work, we do so voluntarily. We also manage a schedule for those who do not have that option. To extend the work day by making sure all the credit cards cleared, to make sure your board doesn't feel cheated out of their "fair share" is completely un-fair to ask. We work on the honor system, as do most non-profits. We have never cheated the board out of their 12%, and had no plans to. The fair asks for an electronic accounting of every transaction. That is not possible. At times, we have entire families with little children, sitting in the hot sun, waiting for a smoothie. We are efficient and quick, and that makes YOUR customers happy. We deal in cash because cash is fast.

Here is the "straw that broke the camel's back" for us. In the article that was published in the Ravalli Republic, there is a photo of Cryss Anderson leaning against the building that houses our booth. The caption below states, "**Ravalli County Fairgrounds managing director (Cryss Anderson) stands near one of the food booth buildings that eventually might be torn down and rebuilt as a pole barn that will accommodate food trucks.**" This caption shows the "long-term" plan of the Fair. We had no knowledge and no communication about this idea. We would hope for the consideration of the fair director and some heads up that we might be forced out to a new location. Renting or buying a food truck or trailer cannot be a consideration. Most non-profits enter the fair each year on a shoe-string budget. For most of us, the food truck idea ends our stay at the fair. Darlene, when I sat down with you a few weeks ago, you made mention that Cryss had plans to relocate different booths according to the size of their menu to make food row flow better. But at what point do we, as the non-profit vendors, get to have a say and an opinion about this? Cryss has no idea what it takes to work our booths. The size of our menu? That's ridiculous!

Unfortunately, many non-profits have pulled out of the fair this year. I strongly believe that, if in the past years, there had been better communication and involvement from the board to the vendors, concerning changes and up-grades to their interest, strong trust between the two could have been established. From our experience, we do not feel like we have been allowed to have an input on any decisions concerning our booth. In fact, we have felt that if we question the fair office, or even express our concerns, then we are welcome to leave.

This is not an environment we choose to work under any longer. We will find another avenue to raise money for our boys. Obviously, the Ravalli County Fair is far more interested in its bottom line than ensuring that the Fair is what it is meant to be: an annual event for people of all ages to renew friendships or make new ones, to ride carnival rides that blink and rev every twelve months in this town, to enjoy excellent cowboys and cowgirls showing what they can do, to donate money to the non-profit of your choice in exchange for a meal or a treat that only comes around once a year. Maybe you can explain to the little kids with cancer that the Shriners were just not willing to adjust to the electronic age. Shame on Ravalli County Fair! Instead of walking up to a booth and asking how you can be of service to the service organizations, you have chosen your money over your friends and neighbors. I hope the Shriner's can find another source of income to continue to do what they do. And the Soroptimists. And the American Legion. And the Rotary Club. And Lighthouse Ministries. And Victor Future Farmers of America. And Cub Scout Pack 99.

Thank you for taking the time to read this letter Darlene. Good luck in your new position at the Fair. Please present this letter to whomever needs to read it. It is probably more professional that we present it to the board ourselves, but I don't think they really care how we walk away. That whole consideration thing I was talking about.

We will be in our booth over the next few weeks to get our belongings out. Behind our booth is a utility sink that has our name on it. Your workers hooked it up to the building without our consent two years ago. We would like it detached so we can take it with us. We will need it at our next location.

Respectfully,

Kelly Jessop

Pack 99 Smoothie Booth