

I've trekked through the fairgrounds on my bike in the early mornings this summer on my way to the track. Quiet. No one else around. Lots of wide-open space.

And then it happens. Fair week approaches. The lights remain on at night. There are a few people setting up things here and there. What a tremendous amount of organization it takes to plan the layout of the grounds. Every foot of space is mapped out. It's one thing to have it on paper, but then it all has to fit together as the little fair town forms.

I've never really thought that you don't just start at the end placing one booth for the expo, then move on to the next and the next. Imagine when the first person shows up who's in the middle. It's not like you count the storefronts and go to the sixth one over because it's just ground space at that point. Space has to be measured so that there's enough room left on each side for the designated remaining booths.

Same goes for the carnival. It's not like you can set up the Ferris wheel, then move it over a few yards to better accommodate another ride or food booth.

I live on the same corner year 'round. It's absolutely fascinating to watch the neighborhood suddenly change before my eyes. Campers move in. The rides and lights illuminate the sky. Vehicles fill the parking lots. The selection of eating establishments in town multiplies. Within days, we have thousands of neighbors.

I love the fair. It's the best place to run into people, some who have come many miles to get there and some who live right here but I never see. I'm always amazed at how the kids grow up. And for some reason it's at the fair that I especially notice that.

That's one thing I love about my volunteer time in the information booth. We see people approach all the way from the entrance. Oh my gosh. Can those kids really be that grown up? He looks exactly like his dad. Isn't she just a kid herself? Are those all her kids? Wait. She is an adult now. Oh that's right. I'm a grandma.

I'm amazed at how some little toddlers are still going strong as the midnight hour approaches. The kiddy rides are still running. Why not? It's sure a more enjoyable time than in the heat of the afternoon.

And then it happens. The fair's over. Overnight, the skyline changes when the high rises disappear, all packed up and moving on to the next location. Day by day, the grounds return to the wide-open space. It's quiet.

Sudden change in activity level doesn't happen only at the fairgrounds. Take an afternoon in front of the school this week. It's quiet. Sidewalks are empty. The motion begins. School buses approach and fill the driveway. Parents wait in vehicles to pick up their children. Then the bell rings and zazooom. It all becomes a buzz.

Doors open. Kids come from all directions, some getting on the bus, some heading down the sidewalk for their walk home, some going back into the building for something they forgot, some finding their bikes, others climbing aboard the vehicle awaiting them. Vehicles and bodies leave the grounds in all directions. The buses pull out. A few more people make their way out of the building.

Then in a matter of minutes, it's quiet again. But only until the next activity. A filled calendar guarantees that the buzz will again return.

Be it fairs, school activities, day care centers, churches, swimming pools, stores, theaters, highways, stadiums. It's the people who turn the quiet empty atmosphere into a buzz of

excitement.

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