



"BOWLEGGED H" MAGAZINE

WINTER 2017 • VOL. XXV NO. 4 • HOUSTON LIVESTOCK SHOW AND RODEO™



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WINTER 2017

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With the holidays quickly approaching, the Houston Livestock Show and Rodeo™ is just around the corner. And, even though the Show is still a few months out, we are in full-swing planning and preparing for the upcoming year. In this issue, I am pleased to share with you some exciting developments for 2018.

First, the new RODEOHOUSTON® stage arrived in Houston in mid-October and is currently being assembled and tested. Equipped with the latest entertainment technology, the stage's arrival marks the beginning of a new era of entertainment for the Show and raises the bar for future acts. The culmination of your efforts and several years of planning afforded us the opportunity to make this upgrade, and I will be sending out a personal invitation to our volunteers for a stage tour in February.

Second, as the Show continues to grow and expand its footprint, we are constantly in need of more space. To accommodate such impressive growth, the Show has acquired approximately 45 acres in the Astroworld lot across from I-610. Similar purchases were made by the Show in 2012 and 2014, and with this purchase, we now own a total of 102 acres to utilize for future growth. Your tremendous support allows us to entertain more guests each year, and in order to remain the world's greatest livestock show and rodeo, we need to expand our footprint. Please know that we understand the need

FROM THE **CHAIRMAN OF THE BOARD**

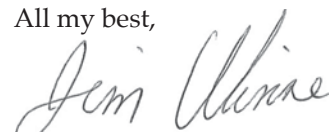
for long-range planning and are continually looking for ways to secure our future.

Since 2003, our volunteer base has increased from 14,000 to 33,000 strong in 2017. Each of you are an asset to our organization, and I am proud to consider myself a member of the Show family. In celebration of the "Spirit of the Volunteer," we want to learn the stories of the faces behind the Gold Badge. To do this, we have created the volunteers.rodeohouston.com platform for you to share your journey with the Show, and I encourage you to share your story.

For many of us, volunteering at the Houston Livestock Show and Rodeo is a tradition that sometime spans several generations. I know you have all been working hard to prepare for the upcoming Show. I thank you for your dedication and time spent attending meetings, traveling to functions, coordinating fundraising events, and more to ensure that the 2018 Show is an even greater success than years past.

I hope you take this time during the holiday season to relax and spend some quality time with family and friends. I'll see you in 2018! 🤠

All my best,



Jim Winne

MY #RHSCHOLAR STORY:

THE AMERICAN DREAM

BY TAYLOR WILSON

Oppportunity — a good position, chance or prospect for advancement or success. These words are exactly what the Opportunity Scholarship offered Binh Vu, a 2006 Houston Livestock Show and Rodeo™ scholarship recipient, as he embarked on his journey to study biology at the University of Houston.

Vu and his family first moved to America when he was just six years old to start a new life. The move was the beginning of several new opportunities for Vu: becoming a Houston Cougar, accepting a Rodeo scholarship, and landing a job as a pediatric resident in a Florida hospital for children. In his words, “My success story all started with the amazing Houston Livestock Show and Rodeo scholarship. The scholarship provided me the financial opportunity for college without loans and the opportunity to network and help the community.”

Although he applied for several other scholarships during his college search, a Rodeo scholarship was Vu’s very first scholarship to obtain, which gave it extra importance and meaning in his life. The Opportunity Scholarship that Vu received focuses on outstanding students from Houston-area public school districts, benefiting the youth and supporting education. By receiving the award, the entire Vu family found a team of believers to support their family unit.

“The Opportunity Scholarship was a big honor,” Vu said. “I plan to move back to Houston and be an active [Rodeo] member in the future.” The Rodeo has enabled Vu and hundreds of other students to be in a good position to advance in their careers and become successful. By helping just one individual, so many more will benefit through Vu and his future plans in the medical field. 🏆

JOIN THE COMMUNITY AND SHARE
YOUR SCHOLARSHIP STORY AT
MYSTORY.RODEOHOUSTON.COM

#RHSCHOLAR



I am a first generation college student and son of immigrants from Vietnam. Receiving the Houston Livestock Show and Rodeo™ scholarship provided the means to achieve the American Dream.



— Binh Vu



DEEP IN THE "ART" OF TEXAS

BY GINA STEERE
PHOTOS BY LINDA EVANS



Every summer, deep in the Texas Hill Country, you will find high school students honing their artistic skills at the Western Art Academy. Founded in 1984, the WAA is a unique, four-week college course held at Schreiner University in Kerrville, Texas. Western art is the focal point of the program where advanced oil painting and sculpting techniques are taught by Western art professionals. Students who complete the program walk away with new life skills that will take them far beyond a blank canvas.

The Houston Livestock Show and Rodeo™ is an avid supporter of the WAA, and provides generous donations to the program that helps pay for meals and housing for students, art supplies and instruction. WAA projects are divided equally into two, two-week sessions: one for sculpting and one for advanced oil painting. Throughout the course, students research Western art history at the Western Art Museum located in town, and take field trips to local ranches to sketch and photograph live subjects such as cowboys, chuck wagons, horses and longhorn cattle.

By the end of the class, students will have produced two complete oil paintings, one three-dimensional sculpture and one two-dimensional sculpture known as a "relief." Many of the WAA students have submitted their work for judging in the Rodeo's School Art Program. Additionally, students who successfully complete the course will receive three hours of college credit.

"The Western Art Academy is an amazing opportunity for our students to take a deep dive into their art," said Heather Boyce, chairman of the School Art Committee. "Not only do they experience the opportunity to work in new mediums expanding and refining their skills, but they also gain exposure to working artists. Students learn to build relationships with others in the art industry and how to market their work to buyers. This incredible experience gives them a solid foundation for the rest of their academic and professional careers."

In addition, the program provides the opportunity for students to experience college life, while preparing them for



the future. For many, this is their first time to be away from family for more than a week or away from home on their own. For others, it is their first time to room with someone they did not know, wash their laundry and learn time management skills.

“There were many times I really missed my family, but this experience was worth it,” said Barbara Sulbaran, a senior at Tompkins High School in Katy, Texas. “The entire month was filled with various learning activities that influenced me a lot. The lessons that personally helped me the most were the business lessons. I learned great social skills, how to sell my art, and how to be a professional businesswoman. For me, it was helpful knowledge that you don’t have the chance to learn while in you are in school.”

Valerie Olsen, a representative for Shriner University and program liaison for the Rodeo, provided valuable insight into the experience of WAA. “Students come together in the summer as strangers from different school districts and social backgrounds,” she said. “While attending WAA,

they develop newfound confidence both in their artistic abilities and in themselves as a successful artist in just four short weeks. Over the years, many have expressed that this opportunity is a life-changing experience for them — one that brings tremendous personal growth. And many students make friendships here that last a lifetime.”

Some of the participants are high school seniors who will move on in the fall to begin a college career or a new chapter in their lives. Others who are still attending high school will have the opportunity to come back to the Rodeo and compete in next year’s School Art competition.

In 2017, there were 48 attendees, and the program continues to grow every year. Anyone can attend the graduation ceremony and art auction on the last Saturday of the WAA program. In 2018, the ceremony will take place on July 7, and you won’t want to miss this weekend of art appreciation in Kerrville — both the weather and the art are sure to be hot! 🌞

GET TO KNOW *Your Chairman of the Board:*

HOW DID YOU GET STARTED IN RODEO?

I grew up in the small town of Cypress, Texas which was very rural at the time. You really couldn't walk next door to your neighbor's house. We didn't have soccer fields or basketball courts nearby so most of the time we had to create our own home-grown entertainment. My father was a veterinarian and ran his own cattle operation so I grew up around horses and cattle. My brother and some of our friends would pen some of dad's calves, put ropes around their waist and try to ride them as if we were some big time bull riders. Most of the time we were summarily bucked off. We got all those great bull riding ideas from going to the local Cypress rodeo on Friday nights during the summer. I would watch the bull riders and bareback riders and I would think, "Wow! When I grow up, I want to do that!" As soon as I was old enough to enter the Junior Bull Riding event, I did. I won the bull riding on the first night out and went home with a whopping \$24.00. The bull pretty much just ran down the arena, but I was hooked. I will say, my mom wasn't all that happy about my newfound bull riding career.

HOW LONG DID YOU COMPETE?

Well, from the time I was 14 years old to the time I was 35 ... so longer than I should have probably.

Growing up, I was in the Texas Youth Rodeo Association, and I competed in the National High School Finals Rodeo in Hallettsville, Texas. South Texas Junior College had a rodeo team, and I went to the National Intercollegiate Finals in Bareback Riding. I was also a member of the Texas Rodeo Association.

Competing for as long as I did worked well because I was living and working in Texas. In my first job as an independent petroleum landman, I was sent to different counties to run title. I was working as a field landman during the week and rodeoing on the weekends. As far as I was concerned, life was good.

TELL US WHY YOUR PERSONAL EXPERIENCES WITH RODEO AND RANCHING GIVES YOU A GREATER APPRECIATION FOR THE HOUSTON LIVESTOCK SHOW AND RODEO™.

I was in FFA when I was in high school, and I actually raised

a pen of steers that I showed here. To show animals at the Houston Livestock Show™ was a very big deal to me. When I joined the Calf Scramble Committee, I saw first hand what it meant to the kids and especially their parents. I cannot tell you how many parents come up to me and tell me that if it wasn't for the Show their children would not have been able to attend college. They are very sincere, and you can see it. You can feel it. Nearly every time I visit other Texas towns, I meet someone who has a wonderful Houston Livestock Show and Rodeo experience to share. The Show has a very profound and positive effect on people's lives.

HOW HAS YOUR BUSINESS CAREER PREPARED YOU FOR YOUR ROLE AS CHAIRMAN OF THE BOARD?

I was in the oil and gas exploration business for 35 years, and I have been involved with both public and private companies. During that time, I was the CEO of four different companies. That business experience has prepared me for this opportunity and this honor.

WHAT ARE YOU MOST LOOKING FORWARD TO AS CHAIRMAN OF THE BOARD?

The people. I am in awe of how this whole thing works. The volunteers are just awesome — they move mountains. I am looking forward to getting to know as many people as I can and learning more about their stories.

What if you were running a company and you had 33,000 volunteers with the amount of expertise that we have? We must have the deepest talent pool of any company in the world. If you need something done, there is someone that can and will get it done.

WHAT IS ONE THING THAT YOU WANT TO ACCOMPLISH DURING YOUR TENURE?

The Houston Livestock Show and Rodeo has been around for 85 years because the people who came before us did such a wonderful job perpetuating and growing without sacrificing the public's experience. We need to expand our footprint. We are at maximum capacity. And, I believe we are making good decisions to position the Show for a strong and solid future.

Q&A WITH JIM WINNE



Winne riding "Sun Down" during the 1973 College National Finals Rodeo in Bozeman, Montana.



In 1975, Winne won the CyFair Rodeo Bareback Riding Champion title.



Winne with his mom, Verda, attending the Houston Fat Stock Show at the Sam Houston Coliseum in 1956.



"FOR A GUY IN A HIGH PROFILE POSITION, I AM A LOW PROFILE GUY."

TELL US ABOUT A MEMORY YOU HAVE FROM YOUR TIME WORKING ON A CALF SCRAMBLE COMMITTEE.

Although there are too many to mention, one of the most startling experiences was when the Calf Scramble Donors Committee pranksters wired the podium so that every time I touched it, I shocked myself! And, of course, a very memorable moment was the first time I saw Lynda smiling at me from across the room.

SPEAKING OF LYNDA, HOW DID THE TWO OF YOU MEET?

We met while we were both volunteering on the Calf Scramble Donors Committee. But, she tells a better story. She says I didn't talk to her for a year. I don't remember it that way, but that is her side of the story.

WHAT DO YOU ENJOY DOING IN YOUR TIME OUTSIDE OF RODEO?

Every chance I get, I go to our ranch in Victoria, Texas, or the bay house on the coast. The ranch keeps me grounded. It is such a big part of my heritage.

WHAT IS SOMETHING THAT OUR READERS MIGHT NOT KNOW ABOUT YOU?

For a guy in a high profile position, I am a low profile guy. I am quiet but observant. I like to watch people and read their body language. I tend to try to listen more than I talk. People always say I'm quiet, but I'm generally just listening.

I am 66 years old. For a kid from Cypress, Texas, to have a rodeo career and then end up being on boards of companies and doing business in New York, it was a pretty wild ride in itself. Now, at this point in my life, being back involved in rodeo at this level and being able to devote time to it is a humbling experience. I feel really blessed. 🤠



*Jim and his wife, Lynda,
a member of the
Calf Scramble Donors Committee,
live in Fulshear, Texas.*

Share Your Volunteer Story

A MESSAGE FROM

JIM WINNE,

CHAIRMAN OF THE BOARD

In 2018, the Houston Livestock Show and Rodeo™ will celebrate the **"Spirit of the Volunteer"** to honor the 33,000-plus individuals who dedicate countless hours of time and energy to the Show.

If you have volunteered any amount of time with the Show, you understand that we are more like a family than coworkers or friends. What makes our family so unique is that we are all from different backgrounds, bringing with us a wealth of knowledge and a variety of skillsets. As part of the "Spirit of the Volunteer" celebration, we want to go beyond the Gold Badge and learn your story.

Please visit

volunteers.rodeohouston.com

and tell us about your volunteer journey.



MEET THE RODEOHOUSTON® BULLFIGHTERS

BY KATE BRADLEY BYARS

Hooves punch the air, snot slings and the sound of the buzzer marks eight seconds. The bull rider's job may be over, but the bullfighter's role has just begun. Bullfighting in today's rodeo arena means not only entertaining the crowd with witty banter and some Olympic gymnast-caliber moves, but also being willing to throw yourself between a 2,000-plus pound bull and the rider who just jumped off his back.

At RODEOHOUSTON, three men take on the responsibility of keeping our bull riders safe — Chuck Swisher, Dusty Tuckness and Cody Webster. For 20 days, they work together to ensure the bull riders' safety and keep the Rodeo rolling. But, what does it take to work together in the arena, and what drives these men to do this job? We went to the experts to find out.

CODY WEBSTER

"It is a demanding sport...like stepping out in the street and letting a truck run you over going 40 miles per hour," Webster said. "Teamwork is the name of the game. It keeps us going, especially when we're in Houston for 20 days, fighting bulls every day. You have to have good partners that you trust, that you get along well with and work with you. We put it all on the line to make a living."

CHUCK SWISHER

"When I was 15 years old, I decided I wanted to ride bulls, but when it came down to that, I was actually too scared to get on one," Swisher said. "At RODEOHOUSTON, they hire the two best bullfighters going down the road — Dusty Tuckness and Cody Webster. If you don't have a good team to help you out, then it is very, very dangerous. All I know is that when I'm staring at a bull head-on, what goes through my mind is, 'God I love my job' or 'don't trip!'"

DUSTY TUCKNESS

"I love my job. Being at RODEOHOUSTON, the atmosphere and camaraderie keeps me motivated and wanting to go to work. It is the best place to be in March, I think," Tuckness said. "We [three] have fought bulls the majority of our lives and have the fundamentals down. It is a lot of reacting and anticipating where a cowboy will fall. The three of us know anything can and will happen in that rodeo arena, and we keep an open mind, positive outlook and focus on what we can do to take care of the bull rider and ourselves." 🤠

CODY WEBSTER

AGE: 24

HOMETOWN: WAYNE, OKLAHOMA

RODEOHOUSTON BULLFIGHTER SINCE 2015





DUSTY TUCKNESS

AGE: 31

HOMETOWN: MEETEETSE, WYOMING
RODEOHOUSTON BULLFIGHTER SINCE 2009

CHUCK SWISHER

AGE: 27

HOMETOWN: DOVER, OKLAHOMA
RODEOHOUSTON BULLFIGHTER SINCE 2014

Preparing Livestock for MARKET

BY MOLLIE DREIBRODT

Raising market animals for the Houston Livestock Show and Rodeo™ is no small feat. Each livestock project requires an investment of time, money and responsibility from the Texas 4-H and FFA exhibitors who care for them.

The timeline below depicts what it takes to prepare market barrows, broilers, goats, lambs, steers and turkeys for the Houston Livestock Show™. It does not account for the routine nutrition, health, sanitation, management or exercise regimes youth exhibitors follow to get their animals ready for the Show.

All timing assumes Show takes place in March.

BROILERS



PRODUCTION PERIOD TIMELINE

January 2018 - March 2018

OCTOBER (or 6 months prior to the Show)

Broiler orders must be placed with the Texas A&M University Department of Poultry Science. Each exhibitor can choose to order 25, 50 or 75 birds.

EARLY JANUARY

Prepare facilities and equipment for arrival of chicks by cleaning and disinfecting the environment, waterers, feeders, etc.

JANUARY

Broilers are picked up from Texas A&M University in College Station at a few days old, and chicks are kept in a brooder (a warm environment) for about four weeks following pickup.

FEBRUARY

Most chicks are vaccinated and wing bands, used for identification, are spread to accommodate growth. Exhibitors cull smaller, deformed or weaker birds.

MARCH

Approximately one to three days prior to the Show, the exhibitor culls additional birds to select the one pen of three broilers to be exhibited.

TURKEYS



PRODUCTION PERIOD TIMELINE

November 2017 - March 2018

SEPTEMBER

Turkey orders must be placed with the Texas A&M University Department of Poultry Science. Each exhibitor can choose to order between five and 75 birds.

EARLY NOVEMBER

Prepare facilities and equipment for arrival of chicks by cleaning and disinfecting the environment, waterers, feeders, etc.

NOVEMBER

Turkeys are picked up from Texas A&M University in College Station at a few days old, and are kept in a brooder (warm environment) for about four weeks following pickup.

DECEMBER

Most turkeys are vaccinated and wing bands, used for identification, are spread to accommodate growth.

FEBRUARY

Exhibitors cull smaller, deformed or weaker birds.

MARCH

Exhibitor culls additional birds approximately one to three days prior to the Show to select the turkey tom or hen to be exhibited.

BARROWS



PRODUCTION PERIOD TIMELINE

August 2017 - March 2018

LATE AUGUST/EARLY SEPTEMBER

Piglets are born. All barrows exhibited at the Show must have ears notched for identification by the breeder within seven days of birth.

OCTOBER/NOVEMBER

Students purchase barrows to exhibit at the Show.

BY NOVEMBER 30

Barrows must be placed on feed by exhibitors and physically validated in the county of residence. At validation, barrows receive ear tags for identification.

MARCH

Barrows' hair is clipped in preparation for the Show. To be eligible for competition, barrows must weigh between 240 and 280 pounds at time of the Show.

LAMBS



PRODUCTION PERIOD TIMELINE

January 2017 - March 2018

JANUARY-MARCH

Lambs are born.

APRIL-JUNE

Students purchase lambs from breeders.

BY OCTOBER 31

All students planning to exhibit lambs at the Show must physically validate animals in their county. At validation, lambs receive ear tags for identification.

MARCH

Lambs are sheared. To be eligible for competition, lambs must weigh a minimum of 90 pounds (Southdowns and Dorpers) to 100 pounds (all other breeds) at the time of the Show.

GOATS



PRODUCTION PERIOD TIMELINE

March 2017 - March 2018

MARCH-JUNE

Goats are born.

APRIL-OCTOBER

Goats are purchased from breeders.

BY OCTOBER 31

All students planning to exhibit goats at the Show must physically validate in their county. At validation, goats receive ear tags for identification.

MARCH

Goats are clipped. To be eligible for competition, goats must weigh between 65 and 115 pounds at time of the Show.

STEERS



PRODUCTION PERIOD TIMELINE

October 2016 - March 2018

OCTOBER-DECEMBER

Steers that will be exhibited at the Show are typically born in the fall, a little more than one year prior to showing.

APRIL

Most validation tag orders are placed, i.e., exhibitors have expressed interest in showing a steer and communicated that interest/potential commitment to their County Extension Agent or FFA advisor.

APRIL-JUNE

Steer prospects are weaned by breeders and sold to youth exhibitors.

JUNE

All steers exhibiting at the Show must be physically validated in the county of residence by June 30 in the calendar year preceding the Show. At validation, steers receive an ear tag for identification.

MARCH

Exhibitors slick shear steers so the hair does not exceed one-fourth inch, except for the tail switch. To be eligible for competition, steers must weigh a minimum of 1,000 pounds at time of the Show.

Production Period Timeline

	Oct. 2016	Nov. 2016	Dec. 2016	Jan. 2017	Feb. 2017	Mar. 2017	Apr. 2017	May 2017	June 2017	July 2017	Aug. 2017	Sept. 2017	Oct. 2017	Nov. 2017	Dec. 2017	Jan. 2018	Feb. 2018	Mar. 2018	
BROILERS																			
TURKEYS																			
BARROWS																			
LAMBS																			
GOATS																			
STEERS																			

*2 calendar years prior to show (i.e., October 2016 for March 2018 Show date)

THE AMERICAN CUTTING HORSE



YESTERYEAR TO TODAY

BY GIGI WARK

PHOTOS BY LINDA EVANS

The heritage of the American Cutting Horse runs as deep and as strong as the roots of the century-old mesquites that line the King Ranch trails. In the era of working cowboys and open range cattle ranches, a wrangler would put together a remuda, or a herd of saddle-broken horses, usually Quarter Horses, for ranch hands to choose their mount for the day. Cowboys looked for a horse that would prick his ears toward a cow, follow it instinctively with his eyes, not crowding, yet somehow aware of its every move, and then successfully sort it from the herd — all

qualities of the American Cutting Horse.

Riding into the 20th century with the use of pickup trucks and squeeze chutes, the need for the cutting horse was becoming obsolete. One thing remained true, however, the cutting horse made a difficult job easier and, most importantly, fun. Cutting as a sport was born out of necessity, derived from friendly competitions between ranches as a way to showcase the disciplined equestrian legacy of this uniquely talented working horse. In 1898, the first advertised cutting event was held, and in 1919, cutting made its debut

as an arena spectators' event. By 1946, there were so many cutting contests with innumerable rules and conditions that a group of 13 cutting horse owners recognized a need for order and direction. As a result, they formed the National Cutting Horse Association in Fort Worth, Texas.

The Houston Livestock Show and Rodeo™ is one of the most prestigious horse shows in the world, therefore, it is only fitting that the Rodeo includes a cutting horse competition. The 2018 Cutting Horse Show will take place from Feb. 23 through March 2 in NRG Arena, and competitions begin daily at 8 a.m. There are various classes of competition, ranging from non-professional, amateur and professional, as well as classes based on how much money a horse has previously won in competition, with some contestants entering multiple classes.

By today's standards, cutting is a Western-styled equestrian event in which the horse and rider are judged on how they work as a team to demonstrate the horse's athleticism. The horse showcases the ability to select a cow from a herd, and to read and block a cow in a quick, sure and deft athletic manner. The 2017 competition had more than 500 entries. Prizes

in each class range from custom halters, buckles, boots and spurs to custom saddles for the \$15,000 limited amateur, the \$50,000 limited amateur, the \$35,000 non-professional, junior youth and senior youth winners.

Mark Mills, a member of the National Cutting Horse Association Hall of Fame, attended the 2017 Houston Livestock Show and Rodeo to participate in the Cutting Horse Show. When asked what he looks for in a good cutting horse, Mills said "...a pretty head. After all, everyone loves a good-looking horse. Most importantly...wide, strong, powerful, muscular hind quarters, [so the horse] knows how to move with presence, intent and agility."

The cutting horse that worked the ranch of yesterday is a more well-rounded ranch horse, today. "For the competition cutting horse, the basics of training start as young as two years old, after breaking the horse to the bridle and saddle," Mills said. "Competition trainers are more concerned about the position, form and expression of how the horse works a cow. In the arena, the job is more about the aesthetics of how the horse and rider work the cow than about getting the job done, which is what counts on a working ranch."

Cutting today is more of a sport or hobby than a business for the cutting horse owner. For Mills, cutting is an opportunity to share his passion for the sport, and most importantly, the talents of the cutting horse. "I love to train and share the passion of riding," he said. "The rule for training is this — you must be old enough or young enough to pull back on those reins and stop that horse. I can teach you everything else. There is no feeling in the world like riding a cutting horse and feeling truly capable of piloting that horse. You're not just a passenger, you're a participant." 🤠



**“ YOU’RE NOT JUST A PASSENGER,
YOU’RE A PARTICIPANT. ”**

– Mark Mills, a member of the National Cutting Horse Association Hall of Fame

TRAILBLAZER BOOK DRIVE

BY SANDY HOLLINGSWORTH SMITH





According to the Handbook of Early Literacy Research, Volume 2, the ratio of age-appropriate books per child in low-income neighborhoods is one book for every 300 children. For many children, books are a luxury that they cannot afford, but thanks to the efforts of the Trailblazer Committee, more than 150,000 books have been collected and distributed to children across the Houston area in the past three years.

In April 2014, Sharleen Walkoviak, past officer in charge of the Trailblazer Committee, had the idea to create a book drive to support literacy in the Houston area while she was attending the Barbara Bush Houston Literacy Foundation's Celebration of Reading event. When one of the speakers told of the need for 30,000 children's books, Walkoviak knew the Houston Livestock Show and Rodeo™ could help.

At the time, the Rodeo had 30,000 volunteers, and Walkoviak wanted to find a way to collect one book from every volunteer to meet the need. With the help of Gretchen Gilliam, who at the time was the incoming chairman of the Trailblazers Committee, they created Rodeo ROPES, which stands for "Reading Opens the Path to Education Success."

The committee embraced its new goal to educate and promote the importance of literacy and began hosting book drives, which were so successful that they soon discovered they needed a facility for book storage, sorting and distribution. Thus, a partnership began with Books Between Kids, a Houston nonprofit whose mission is to collect gently used books and distribute them to children in need.

Books Between Kids already had the infrastructure in place, as well as a partnership with the Houston Independent School District, which allowed them to distribute books to

the neediest children within the school's library system, but the organization needed both more books and volunteers. Books Between Kids welcomed the Trailblazer Committee with open arms, and today, the committee is the largest local donor of books to the nonprofit organization.

With more than 160 active committee members, all are required to spend time volunteering at Books Between Kids, logging more than 600 hours in 2016. According to Gilliam, the time spent there has been a real bonding opportunity as the members work side-by-side to sort, count and box books. "It is so fulfilling to see books come through that we loved in our childhood and know that some other child will get to experience the joy of books," Gilliam said.

According to studies, the biggest predictor of academic success is not race, income, gender, parents' education or location — it is the presence of books in the home. This year, the Trailblazer Committee will join Books Between Kids at more than 50 H.I.S.D. elementary schools where disadvantaged children will each be able to choose six books to take home to start their own library. "We hope to change their lives, one book at a time," Gilliam said.

The Trailblazer Committee has collected more than 100,000 books from volunteers since the program began in 2014. Walkoviak and Gilliam are confident the donations will continue to grow each year. Many other committees have already held book drives, issuing challenges to see who can collect the most books, with one committee bringing in more than 10,000 books.

"One book at a used book retailer goes for a couple of dollars, yet that may be the book that changes the life of a student — you just never know," Walkoviak said. 📖

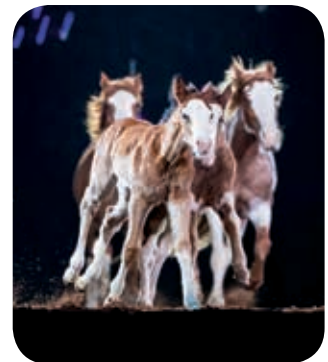


In 2017, the Houston Livestock Show and Rodeo's mission statement was revised to represent the overall goals, direction and focus of the organization. The new mission statement below was approved during the board of directors meeting on Nov. 15, and will be used to guide the Show to new heights for years to come.

HOUSTON LIVESTOCK SHOW AND RODEO™

MISSION STATEMENT

The Houston Livestock Show and Rodeo promotes agriculture by hosting an annual, family-friendly experience that educates and entertains the public, supports Texas youth, showcases Western heritage and provides year-round educational support within the community.





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