



"BOWLEGGED H" MAGAZINE

WINTER 2018 • VOLUME XXVI • NO. 4 • HOUSTON LIVESTOCK SHOW AND RODEO™





"BOWLEGGED H" MAGAZINE

WINTER 2018 Volume XXVI • No. 4

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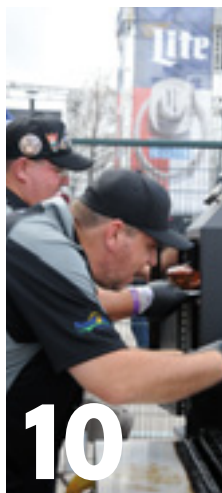
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Questions:

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AGRICULTURE

EDUCATION

ENTERTAINMENT

WESTERN HERITAGE



From the CHAIRMAN OF THE BOARD

The 87th annual Houston Livestock Show and Rodeo™ is just around the corner, and we are excited to offer new and exciting experiences not only for our visitors, but also for our volunteers, exhibitors and contestants.

An exciting change for all in 2019 is the addition of an extra day to accommodate the concert-only performance featuring George Strait, with special guests Robert Earl Keen and Lyle Lovett, on Sunday, March 17. Bringing together three proud Texans and country music greats to perform on the RODEOHOUSTON® stage is sure to be a once-in-a-lifetime experience for our fans. In addition, the 2019 RODEOHOUSTON lineup will be one of the most diverse lineups in the history of the Houston Livestock Show and Rodeo. On Jan. 3, 2019, we will reveal the complete lineup and tickets will go on sale Thursday, Jan. 10 at rodeohouston.com. Mark your calendars, you won't want to miss the exciting entertainment announcement!

By now, many of you have heard the news about our new, unique partnership with the

Professional Rodeo Cowboys Association. Beginning in 2019, RODEOHOUSTON will be an official PRCA money event for the first time in almost nine years, meaning earnings from the Super Series will count toward qualification for the PRCA year-end championship — the National Finals Rodeo. This change will have a significant impact on PRCA athletes' place in the world standings. RODEOHOUSTON is one of the richest rodeos in the world, and through our partnership with PRCA, we will strive to collaboratively grow the sport of rodeo while staying true to the rich traditions, competition elements and presentations of RODEOHOUSTON.

We are already busy promoting the upcoming Rodeo at community events across Houston, including sponsoring the MD Anderson Boot Walk to End Cancer and the "Houston is Tradition" segment of the H-E-B Thanksgiving Day Parade. It is important for us to be involved in the community and to give back to the citizens of Houston and the surrounding areas who continue to attend and support our event each year.

As the Rodeo approaches, we are continuing to investigate ways to improve our parking and transportation efforts across the grounds. During the last few months, I have met with leadership, contractors and volunteer committees to evaluate our current parking and transportation needs, and we will continue to meet to solve problems and develop practical solutions to implement during the 2019 Rodeo.

The Rodeo will be here before we know it, and I hope you will take this time during the holidays to relax and spend quality time with your family and friends. Once we return in the New Year, we will be full-steam ahead and just shy of 60 days away from hosting the world's largest livestock show and rodeo. You, our volunteers and members, are essential to the Rodeo's success — let's make these last few months of planning count. 🤠

All my best,

Jim Winne

HOUSTON LIVESTOCK SHOW AND RODEO™

2019 EDUCATIONAL COMMITMENT

SCHOLARSHIPS.....	\$14,286,000
JUNIOR SHOW EXHIBITORS/CALF SCRAMBLE PARTICIPANTS.....	\$8,305,250
EDUCATIONAL PROGRAM GRANTS	\$3,969,720
GRADUATE ASSISTANTSHIPS.....	\$613,640
TOTAL.....	\$27,174,610

SCHOLARSHIPS

GEOGRAPHIC SCHOLARSHIPS

Houston Area: \$7,000,000.....	350, \$20,000 scholarships
Area Go Texan: \$1,580,000.....	79, \$20,000 scholarships

SPECIALTY SCHOLARSHIPS

Texas 4-H: \$1,400,000.....	70, \$20,000 scholarships
Texas FFA: \$1,400,000.....	70, \$20,000 scholarships
Achievement: \$1,200,000.....	approximately 100, current junior & senior Rodeo scholars
Exhibitor: \$600,000.....	30, \$20,000 scholarships
Hildebrand Family: \$300,000.....	approximately 15, \$20,000 scholarships
School Art: \$300,000.....	15, \$20,000 scholarships
Military: \$100,000.....	5, \$20,000 scholarships

FUNDED SCHOLARSHIPS

Vocational Scholarship Funding: \$300,000.....	funds awarded to colleges/institutions for disbursement
Texas A&M University College of Veterinary Medicine: \$96,000.....	six, \$16,000 scholarships
Texas Christian University Ranch Management Program: \$10,000.....	four, \$2,500 scholarships

Since its beginning in 1932, the Houston Livestock Show and Rodeo™
has **committed more than \$475 million** to Texas youth.

GRADUATE ASSISTANTSHIPS

Angelo State University
Sam Houston State University
Stephen F. Austin State University
Sul Ross State University
Tarleton State University
Texas A&M University

Texas A&M University – Commerce
Texas A&M University – Kingsville
Texas State University
Texas Tech University
West Texas A&M University

EDUCATIONAL PROGRAM GRANTS

AFA
Alley Theatre
Archway Academy
BakerRipley
Barbara Bush Houston
Literacy Foundation
Baylor Research Advocates for
Student Scientists
Big Brothers Big Sisters Lone Star
Books Between Kids
Borderlands Research Institute –
Sul Ross State University
Boys and Girls Clubs of Greater
Houston
Breakthrough Houston
Brookwood Community
Camp For All
The Center for Hearing and Speech
Children's Museum of Houston
Council on Recovery
Chinquapin Preparatory School
Crime Stoppers of Houston
Cristo Rey Jesuit College Preparatory
School of Houston
Girl Scouts of San Jacinto
Glassell School of Art
H.E.A.R.T – Housing, Entrepreneurship
and Readiness Training
Harris County Hospital
District Foundation
The Hobby Center Foundation
Houston Area Women's Center
Houston Ballet Foundation
Houston Community College
Houston Grand Opera
Houston Health Foundation
Houston Hispanic Forum
Houston Police Foundation
Houston SPCA
Houston Symphony
King Ranch Institute for Ranch
Management
Lone Star Flight Museum

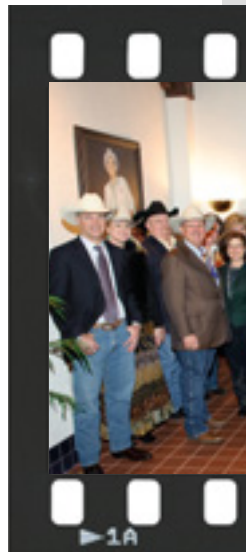
Longhorn Project
Medilife Houston
Miracle Farm
NASA – Texas Aerospace Scholars
Neuhaus Education Center
Prairie View A&M University
Project GRAD Houston
The Rise School of Houston
Sam Houston State University
Schreiner University –
Western Art Academy Workshop
SIRE Therapeutic Horsemanship
Small Steps Nurturing Center
Teach For America – Houston
Texas 4-H
• State 4-H Congress
• State 4-H Leadership Conference
• Striving for Leadership
Texas A&M University:
• Beef Cattle Short Course
• Bush School of Government and Public Service
• Entrepreneurship Bootcamp for Veterans
Texas FFA Association
• National Career Development Winners
• Leadership Development Awards
• State Leadership Conference and
Area Conferences
Texas Parks and Wildlife Foundation
Texas Ranger Association Foundation
Texas Southern University
Texas Tech University
Texas Wildlife Association Foundation
Theatre Under The Stars
• YMCA
• The River Performing and Visual Arts Center
The University of Texas at Austin – UTeach
To Educate All Children – TEACH
University of Houston – Clear Lake
Center for Autism and Development
Disabilities
UTHealth
Writers in the Schools
Yellowstone Academy
YMCA of Greater Houston

REMEMBERING JIM CLEPPER

LIFETIME EXECUTIVE
COMMITTEE MEMBER

BY TODD ZUCKER

Photos Courtesy of the Clepper Family



With the passing of James Michael “Jim” Clepper on March 18, 2018, the Houston Livestock Show and Rodeo™ lost a respected leader and friend. Over the course of many decades, Jim contributed to the Rodeo from his involvement in high school to serving on the Executive Committee. Throughout his life, Jim possessed a rare perspective of the organization’s reach and impact.

Jim’s passion for horses led him to the Houston Livestock Show and Rodeo. As kids, Jim and his brother, Louis, loved riding horses. As a teenager, Jim — a talented rider — joined a mounted drill team that performed during the grand entry during rodeo performances in the Sam Houston Coliseum.

Jim’s committee service began in 1973, when he joined the Lamb Auction Committee — the first of many on which he served with distinction, ultimately becoming its co-chairman. During his volunteer service, Jim rose through the ranks of the Go Texan committees, serving as chairman of the Tomball/ Northwest Go Texan subcommittee, and later, the Metro Go Texan Committee. In 1978, within five years of his first committee shift, Jim was elected to the Rodeo’s board of directors. He became a Rodeo vice president in 1988 and later joined the Executive Committee’s Audit/Budget Committee. In 1996, he became a member of the Executive Committee, which he considered among his highest honors and remained a Lifetime Member on the committee until his passing.



Jim attended St. Pius X High School in Houston before pursuing undergraduate studies at the University of Houston, where he graduated with a Bachelor of Science degree in biology and chemistry. He later served in the U.S. Army Reserves and taught at Burbank Junior High School.

While in college, Jim met his future wife, Vicki Kasmiroski, and they married several years later. Vicki recalled that their life together soon became enmeshed with the Rodeo. They made lasting friendships and enjoyed working alongside other volunteers toward a common goal.

"The Rodeo was right up Jim's alley," Vicki said. "Kids and education were what drove him. He loved everything about the Rodeo, but his real passion was for the educational programs." Vicki described some of the attributes she believed made Jim effective as a leader: "Jim was a man of action. Anything he did, he did all the way. His 'can do' attitude was infectious and inspiring."

Mike Nathanson, a former Educational Programs staff member for the Rodeo who worked closely with Jim on the Educational Contributions Review Committee, echoed that sentiment. "As chairman, Jim led that committee the same way he rode his championship cutting horses: with grace, determination and a personal commitment to excellence," Nathanson said. "Jim was never happier nor more excited than when he met scholarship recipients and heard their stories. Their personal experiences deepened his commitment to educational programming. His vision for

the Rodeo and its future, and for the thousands of young people to be helped — this truly was his labor of love," she said.

Not surprisingly, Jim's talent and energy led to success in business. In the 1970s, he acquired Southwest Solvents and Chemicals, a chemical distributor with one office in Houston. Under his leadership, the company expanded its operations to include seven distribution and storage facilities in Texas and California before he sold the business in 2001.

Jim's son, Mike Clepper, a Houston Livestock Show and Rodeo director, shared Jim's love for cutting horses, cattle and other Rodeo-related activities. Like Vicki, Mike values the lifelong friendships they have made through the Show. Mike got to know Jim's circle of friends as a teenager, when they attended the World's Championship Bar-B-Que Contest and traveled to Go Texan events. Some of his best memories involved the many trips they took to hunt dove, quail or deer — frequently accompanied, of course, by a group of "Rodeo friends."

"My dad was devoted to family, but he also promoted education. In everything he did, dad wanted to give back to the community," Mike said.

Jim was a fine example of a great leader who found purpose in life by serving others. "A part of Jim's legacy is found in the lives of so many young Texans who enjoy a brighter future because of Jim's imprint on the Show and its mission," Nathanson said. 🤠



WHERE CAN I FIND A FRIED OREO®?

BY KATY GRAGG

Have you ever wondered where to find certain attractions on the NRG Park grounds or your favorite fair food during the Houston Livestock Show and Rodeo™? Just ask one of the 967 committee members wearing a turquoise vest.

Each year, the Directions & Assistance Committee welcomes guests to the Rodeo by strategically positioning committee members at key points throughout the grounds and within the stadium to answer questions from visitors.

"We are there to help patrons, to be as positive and helpful as possible, and do whatever is needed," Directions & Assistance Chair Mary Chamberlain said. "Our goal is for people to have a great experience so they come back."

During the beginning of each shift, committee members receive a "cheat sheet" containing any new information added as vendors and events change.

In addition to answering questions from visitors in a friendly and approachable fashion, the committee is also responsible for reuniting lost children with their parents and guardians, along with operating the Lost and Found

office for the duration of the Rodeo.

According to Dru Pease, outgoing committee chair, the most important role of the committee goes beyond answering questions to reuniting children with their parents or guardians. "Our No. 1 goal is to find lost children and connect them with their parents or guardian," Pease said. "If we have a lost child, everything comes to a screeching halt, and it's all hands on deck." Fortunately, the committee has a 100 percent track record of reuniting children with their parents or guardians.

In 2018, the Rodeo had a very low number of lost children, a trend Chamberlain attributed to advanced technology. "Kids with phones are in communication with their parents," Chamberlain said. "Kids even younger than 5 years old have their parents' phone numbers memorized."

When it comes to answering questions and reuniting lost children with their families, the committee goes above and beyond to learn the overall logistics of the Rodeo to ensure committee members provide a hospitable experience for all guests. 🤖

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

"WHERE'S THE FRIED OREOS OR CHOCOLATE COVERED BACON?"

Each year, the committee researches where each year's most popular vendors are located. "Some of the most frequent questions asked have to do with food," Pease said. For example, in 2018, a cheeseburger-stuffed funnel cake placed in the Gold Buckle Foodie competition, making it a popular option for fans, so committee members ensured this spot could be quickly located within the carnival when asked.

"WHERE'S THE ASTRODOME?"

Committee members chuckle when they inevitably receive this question, but if a patron is not a local, it may not register that usually they are standing right in front of it.

"WHERE ARE THE ANIMALS?"

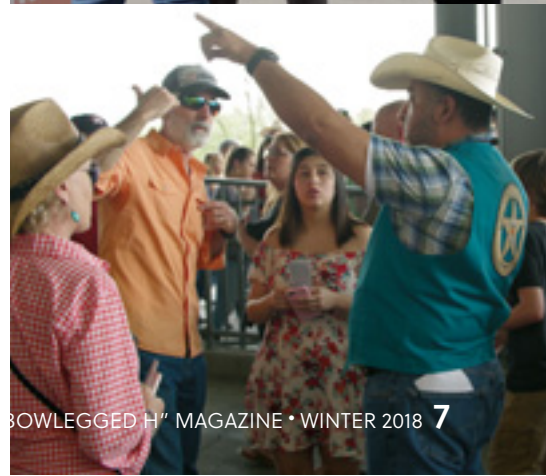
The person asking this usually has a child in tow and is pointed toward the pig races or pony rides.

"I'M NOT FROM TEXAS, BUT WHERE SHOULD I BUY A COWBOY HAT?"

The committee is careful not to endorse one vendor over the other, but instead sends patrons to NRG Center where there are many options for visitors to purchase a cowboy hat. This question also applies to finding the best barbecue.

"WHERE CAN I CHARGE MY PHONE?"

This question is often asked on a daily basis by families looking to spend the entire day at the Rodeo.



RODEOHOUSTON®:

Ropes AND Riggings

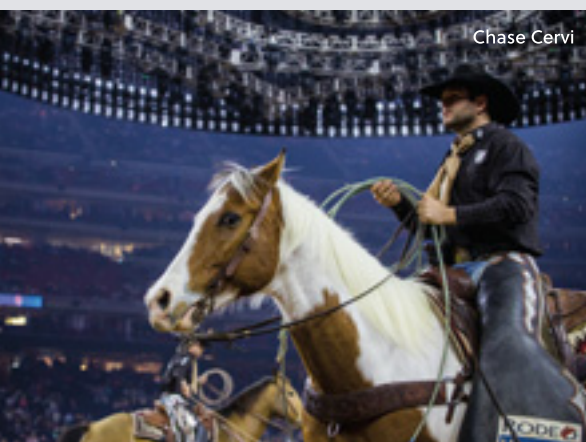
BY TAYLOR WILSON

RODEOHOUSTON pickup man Chase Cervi





Parker Breeding,
2018 RODEOHOUSTON®
Champion Bull Rider



Chase Cervi



Parker Breeding

Many spectators watch in awe during the high-energy rough stock events that take place during RODEOHOUSTON®. From quick turns to high jumps and tough dismounts to dodging a 1,500-pound animal, both cowboys and pick-up men rely heavily on one very important piece of equipment — a rope. For those who voluntarily place themselves on bucking animals and remove them from the arena, the rope can make all the difference.

While some may worry that ropes can potentially harm a bull or horse, Parker Breeding, 2018 RODEOHOUSTON Champion Bull Rider, compares the rope on a bull to a shoelace around a person. "All in all, they [the riggings] aren't hurting the bull. That metal bell weighs the rope down, so it comes off as soon as we let go," Breeding said. "The rope is really for the cowboy because it holds on to me as much as I hold on to it."

For bull riding, ropes provide a sense of security, and each cowboy selects his rope based on the best fit. Hand size plays a factor, so it is important to select a rope that fits comfortably and tightly. "Some riders say the rope doesn't matter, but having a rope that's comfortable makes a difference," Breeding said. To prove that theory, three years ago, Breeding switched from an American-style rope, which leads the rope out the pinky finger, to a Brazilian-style rope, which allows the rope to exit on the side of the index finger. "It's a preference to what you're willing to deal with," Breeding explained. For him, a Brazilian rope allows him to get his hand out quickly after releasing his grip, but the American rope can cause his hand to get stuck if he dismounts on the opposite side of the bull than planned.

Pickup men, the unsung heroes of the rodeo, ride in and safely remove the cowboy from the bronc. Then they make sure the 1,500-plus pound bucking animal is escorted from the arena. For them, ropes are used differently, but they still play a similar role — ensuring safety for all those involved.

Rope choice for a pickup man is determined based on the event. Chase Cervi, RODEOHOUSTON pickup man since 2003, selects ropes of various lengths, choosing a 30-foot rope for bareback and saddle bronc events and a 50-foot rope for bull riding events. He always uses a longer rope for bull riding because, "it's more dangerous and you want space between you and the animal," Cervi said. For bareback events, the 30-foot rope, "is easier to handle since you already have the reins," Cervi said. For these men, ropes are a little less intricate, but it is important to make sure that they are broken in correctly. "They only last about 10 to 12 bulls, and then they're worn out," Cervi said.

As the next RODEOHOUSTON season approaches, a new group of cowboys will take the arena to compete for a championship title. Pay attention to the rope. Although it may be small in size compared to its counterpart, it helps determine the safety and victory of the athletes. 🤠

TEXAS BARBECUE

WITH A TWIST

BY REBECCA MCGOVNEY-INGRAM

Photos by Debbie Porter



2018 WORLD'S CHAMPIONSHIP BAR-B-QUE CONTEST INTERNATIONAL TEAMS:

AUSTRALIA

Manning Valley Natural Smokers
Smoking Hot Smartfires

IRELAND

My Meat Wagon

GREAT BRITAIN

Red's True Barbecue
British Bulldog BBQ

SWEDEN

Lingon & Dill BBQ Team

JAPAN

Japan BBQ Shogun



Lingon & Dill BBQ team members traveled from Sweden to compete in the 2018 competition

LINGON & DILL BBQ

- Team formed five years ago after the Swedish Barbecue Association was created.
- They can't find brisket in Sweden, so they compete using cube roll instead.
- The team captain and another team member own a restaurant together, while a third team member is their head chef.



Japan BBQ Shogun is the only competitive barbecue team in Asia

JAPAN BBQ SHOGUN

- "Shogun" is a Japanese warrior (a samurai chief).
- Japanese barbecue is typically small pieces of meat cooked and then eaten individually.
- Japan BBQ Shogun has competed in all five major competitions in the U.S. and one in Australia.
- Chef makes his own rub and sauce in Japan and then ships it to Houston to compete in the World's Championship Bar-B-Que contest.

Walking through the World's Championship Bar-B-Que Contest at the Houston Livestock Show and Rodeo™ is a blur of colorful tents, cheerful sounds and delicious smells. Tucked away to the side of the Miller Lite Stage at the Garden on the NRG Park grounds is a 7,500 square-foot area behind a chain-link fence. There's an attendant at the gate, tables for socializing, white tents festooned with colorful flags and a jumble of barbecue equipment inside. It might seem small, but it has a global impact — this is the home of the international barbecue teams.

The International Village has been part of the World's Championship Bar-B-Que Contest since 2016, when two teams from Great Britain — Red's True Barbecue and British Bulldogs BBQ — were invited to compete. In 2018, the International Village hosted seven teams from five countries for the competition.

Brian Dunwell, first-year ambassador for the International Village, said that working with the teams is a reward in itself. "We get to host these teams from around the world, teach them about Texas-style barbecue, and learn who the teams are and how they cook," Dunwell said. "The teams bring diversity as well as an international spotlight to the cook-off."

Internationally recognized teams from across the world are invited to submit an application to the World's Championship Bar-B-Que Contest detailing their accomplishments, which the committee reviews to select the following year's invitees.

Once the teams arrive, Dunwell and other committee members help them settle in and find what they need. Trips to the grocery store for supplies are common, and local companies like Pitts and Spitts donate larger equipment for the teams to cook on, although most teams pack or ship their own seasonings and smaller tools.

The international teams achieved some amazing accomplishments during the 2018 World's Championship Bar-B-Que Contest, Dunwell said. "This year we had a team place first in Dutch oven [Lingon & Dill BBQ Team from Sweden], second place in brisket [Manning Valley Natural Smokers

from Australia], second place in ribs [British Bulldog BBQ from Great Britain], and fourth place overall [Red's True Barbecue from Great Britain]."

This was the Swedish team's first year competing in Houston, but team captain Morgan Lundin said they enter two to three competitions a year in Europe. The team is best known for its dessert he said, but has also placed in pork and sauce categories. When asked why the team accepted the invitation to compete in Houston, Lundin said they came to learn and make connections. "We wanted to see how barbecue is done here, and to experience barbecue where everyone is really, really good at it," he said.

With three classically trained chefs on the team, the Dutch-oven dessert they prepared may seem a bit fancy for a Texas barbecue competition — a chocolate mud cake with banana mousse and salted caramel toffee — but the judges approved.

The Japanese team returned to Houston for the second year in 2018. Team captain Tamio Shimojo, who is also president of the Japan Barbecue Association, said they compete three to five times a year in the U.S. "American barbecue is very advanced, a challenge," Shimojo said. "I come to Houston to study and learn."

Shimojo said he takes this knowledge back to Japan and the 10,000 members of the JBA who attend the 60 classes he teaches throughout the year. He considers himself an ambassador for Texas-style barbecue in Japan.

As part of the international outreach by the committee, this year's Overall Grand Champion, the Buns-N-Roses Cook Team, will be issued a reciprocal invitation to compete at a competition hosted by the Australasian Barbecue Alliance. 🍷



Members of the Smoking Hot Smartfires team from Australia preparing chicken for the competition

COMMITTEE U

BY STEPHANIE EARTHMAN BAIRD



AGRICULTURE EDUCATION COMMITTEE

The Ladies' Go Texan Committee is now known as the Agriculture Education Committee. The new name accurately represents the committee's mission of teaching agriculture education at local schools and other educational venues, explained committee chair Renee Humphrey. The committee will maintain their presence in AGVENTURE, presented by Occidental Petroleum, but will expand their activities into new locales while adopting a year-round schedule.

"The re-branding of our committee has already brought us new opportunities," Humphrey said. For example, the committee will now send volunteers into schools to start or revitalize gardens through the "Learn, Grow, Eat & Go!" program, which educates students about the importance of agriculture and healthy food.

In addition, the committee hopes to expand its reach to upper-level students. "We are exploring opportunities with 4-H, FFA and other programs," officer in charge Tonya Yurgensen-Jacks said. Thus, the transition from the Ladies' Go Texan Committee is more than just a name change.

CHUCKWAGON COMMITTEE

In 2018, the Chuckwagon Committee was formed to streamline meal preparation for horse show contestants and volunteers during the run of the Show. With the help of nearly 100 volunteers, the committee creates menus, orders supplies and prepares buffet-style meals for hundreds of contestants and volunteers. "We did this to make it easy for individual horse shows to put their best efforts into their shows and let us do the cooking," officer in charge Mike Curley said. Volunteers turn out tasty meals from their commercial kitchen in NRG Arena, supported by a 40-foot cook trailer.

Committee Chair Mac Ruffeno likened new volunteers on a new committee to "turning kids loose in an art studio with a blank canvas — the painting has just begun," he said. In 2019, Ruffeno and his team will focus on enhancing the hospitality level, but he anticipates the committee will evolve and take on new responsibilities over time.

DID YOU KNOW?

THE RODEO IS SUPPORTED BY
34,000 VOLUNTEERS
SERVING ON **108** COMMITTEES.

UPDATES

During the past year, these Houston Livestock Show and Rodeo™ committees evolved to accommodate the growing needs of the world's largest livestock show and rodeo.



RODEO RUN COMMITTEE

The Rodeo Run Committee is up and running for 2019 and will be responsible for the execution of the annual Houston Livestock Show and Rodeo™ Rodeo Run, presented by ConocoPhillips. Since 1988, the Rodeo Run has contributed nearly \$5 million to the Houston Livestock Show and Rodeo. Seventy-one volunteers, led by Committee Chair Kandyce Kohlmaier, will host 5K and 10K races, alongside a 10K wheelchair race. For those who would rather sleep in than run, the committee provides an online option to donate and receive a T-shirt in return. Volunteers work in one of five areas: registration, race course, equipment, post-race party and marketing.

The committee plans to run further than ever in 2019. "We had 8,900 participants that helped make the 2018 race a huge success and we look forward to making the 2019 run even bigger and better," Kohlmaier said. Furthermore, "It's our goal to provide an outstanding, family-oriented and fun race that brings our community together," officer in charge Tonya Yurgensen-Jacks said.



WINE EVENTS COMMITTEE

In its 16th year, the Houston Livestock Show and Rodeo Rodeo Uncorked!® program continues to grow, and thus, two of the Rodeo's wine committees were restructured to adapt to the enormous expansion of the program. Following the 2018 event, the Wine Events Committee split from the Wine Sales Committee in order to focus on planning and executing all Rodeo Uncorked! events, including the Roundup & Best Bites Competition and the Champion Wine Auction & Dinner. The committee will also support the collective wine committees' marketing and public relations activities.

"Many of the volunteers have been involved for years with the wine committees in one way or another, so it's awesome to see them grow and adapt as the wine program has grown," said Karin Singley, Wine Events committee chair. "We will be focusing on how to enhance the customer experience and recognize our hard-working volunteers," Singley said in regard to the committee's upcoming inaugural year. In addition, "both committees will continue to work together to ensure a great experience for the Rodeo's donors and each team's volunteers," officer in charge J. W. Daubert said. 🍷



AGRICULTURAL MECHANICS

COMPETITIONS SHOWCASE TOMORROW'S TALENT

BY TODD ZUCKER

To be competitive in the workforce, equipment manufacturers need skilled employees. A search for talent in Texas should not take long, thanks in part to the Houston Livestock Show and Rodeo™. Each year during the Rodeo, the State FFA Tractor Technician Contest and Agricultural Mechanics Project Show highlight thousands of high school students with the ability to fabricate and maintain agricultural and industrial equipment at a professional level.

Photos by Linda Evans



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During the State FFA Tractor Technician Contest, students complete an objective mechanical test along with an in-depth written test to assess their knowledge of various equipment components. The top-scoring teams advance to the final round in the NRG Center Main Arena to put teamwork, problem-solving and technical skills to the test in a hands-on competition to diagnose mechanical malfunctions on actual tractors. Each tractor has the same five malfunctions and each team is given a work order describing the issues. Once the work order is received, each team has 30 minutes to diagnose and repair all malfunctions. During the competition, tension builds as competing teams begin cranking their engines, eliciting cheers from the crowd. Once the tractor cranks, it must make a complete lap around the arena before the clock stops. Scoring involves factors that are necessary in a real working environment: using knowledge and skill to complete a job properly, safely and efficiently.

In addition to the Tractor Technician Contest, hundreds of showroom-quality trailers and agricultural and industrial equipment fill the northeast corner of NRG Center during the Agricultural Mechanics Project Show. Visitors and newcomers to the Rodeo are often blown away once they realize these large, complicated pieces of machinery were built basically from scratch by students.

Although the dazzling array of equipment can overwhelm visitors, keen-eyed, experienced judges follow detailed, class-based criteria to ensure each of the hundreds of student projects are given a fair comparison. The show includes 26 classes of agricultural machinery and equipment, livestock

equipment, bumper-pull trailers, gooseneck trailers, and modified trailers. Students also restore tractors in three classes: 1947 and older, 1948 – 1961, and 1962 – 1993.

“Year after year, I continue to be impressed with the quality of their [the students’] projects, and particularly the sophistication of their solutions and designs,” said Archie Thompson, officer in charge of the Agricultural Mechanics Committee. “I oftentimes pause to realize that I’m talking to middle and high school kids rather than advanced college engineering students, which is a testament to their capabilities and the practicality of their knowledge and skills.”

After judges pin ribbons on the top projects during the judging process, excitement builds for Sunday’s awards ceremony, in which class and division winners, along with grand champion and reserve champion projects are announced. Students also receive showmanship awards by showing professionalism, enthusiasm and knowledge, and job fair awards based on high marks during interviews with employers and colleges. Each year, one student receives an award for overall excellence, given in honor of the late Dr. Billy Harrell, an agricultural mechanics professor who was influential in many of the agricultural mechanics programs throughout Texas.

“Watching these participants, many of whom return year after year, you can really see them develop the core skills of teamwork, problem-solving, design and presentation, along with the skills needed to build projects, such as welding, fit up, cutting and finishing,” said Ross Jones, Agricultural Mechanics Committee chair. “What you see in action during our events is truly excellence in agriculture through competition, which solidly supports the Rodeo’s educational mission.”

For students who spend months fabricating competition-ready projects, the Agricultural Mechanics Project Show prepares students for the workforce. By participating in the Project Show, students receive exposure to state-of-the-art techniques and industry professionals while learning teamwork, patience, persistence and other attributes that will open doors to successful careers. Competitions like the Agricultural Mechanics Project Show and Tractor Technician Contest prove the talent is strong and the future is bright for the American mechanical industry. 🤖



ROCK AN

BY ASHLEY PLAEGER

Photo by Lisa Norwood

The Stars Over Texas Stage is set. Rodeo Rockstar contestants and guests can hear the commotion over the familiar midway sounds as anxious performers take their seats and one by one are called to the stage. The competition is fierce and the winners lie in the hands of three experienced judges.

For the past seven years, contestants between 6 and 21 years old have submitted audition videos to the Rodeo Rockstar competition. In 2018, 80 videos were reviewed and more than 47,000 public votes were cast to determine the top 20 entries that advanced to the semifinal round in three divisions: Junior, Senior and Group.

During the semifinal round, Tuesday, March 6, the three judges sat quietly, adjacent to the performance stage, ready to evaluate Texas' top young talent. Each judge has a background in music and performance, and shares a love of all things Rodeo.

Joey Guerra, music critic from the *Houston Chronicle*, regularly interviews performers who visit Houston, and his blog features musical happenings all across the city. Throughout his career, Guerra has interviewed iconic artists including Taylor Swift, Miley Cyrus, Beyoncé, Justin Bieber, Miranda Lambert and Jason Aldean. He returns every year to help with Rodeo Rockstar because of the inspirational



From left Cowboy Dave, Joey Guerra and Phil Nudelman

ND RODEO

talent the competition attracts. When looking for new talent, he says “confidence” is what matters most. “Some performances stick with you. You think about them later,” Guerra said. “Those are the performers that you know have a future in this industry.”

Seated next to Guerra is Phil Nudelman, who is no stranger to the spotlight as the longtime front man of legendary rock band, Foghat. For the past 12 years, he has served as the RODEOHOUSTON® Concert Video Director. “The hardest part about judging is picking a winner,” Nudelman said. “You never know what you will see. Sometimes competitors perform in Spanish, others will

present a jazz compilation, and a few artists will sing songs that they wrote. I enjoy being part of this event.”

The third Rodeo Rockstar judge is none other than “Cowboy Dave” from The Morning Bull on 100.3 The Bull. He is a native Houstonian and fourth-generation Texan. Among his career accomplishments are a Country Music Association award and an invitation to play guitar for Brooks & Dunn. When asked why he participates year after year as a Rodeo Rockstar judge, he said, “Why wouldn’t I come back? I am here to support the homegrown talent, and we have a lot of it.” 🤠

HOW TO BE A TEAM ROPER

BY CRYSTAL MCKEON

For hundreds of years, hard-working ranch hands have operated in tandem, roping cattle larger than they could handle on their own. Over time, team roping has evolved into a sport seen at rodeos all over the world today. In the activity, two riders and their respective horses must work together and have perfect timing for a successful run. The two cowboys, known as the header and the heeler, must rope a steer as quickly as possible while incurring the least number of penalties. Matt Sherwood and Walt Woodard, 2018 RODEOHOUSTON® Team Roping Champions, hold the Rodeo record at four seconds flat. We caught up with them to find out the equation behind “How to be a Team Roper.”

STEP 1: A GOOD ROPE

The Header Rope is light, flexible and soft and can easily slip over the steer’s horns. This rope is swung overhead in a large, flat motion before it’s released to rope the steer. The Heeler Rope is sturdy and stiff to tightly hold the narrow feet of the steer. When the rope is thrown, the timing must be perfect so that the steer steps into the rope as its feet hit the ground. When you dally, you wrap the end of the rope around the saddle horn to restrict the slack on the rope holding the steer. If the roper’s thumb gets in the line when the slack tightens, it can result in serious injury, such as losing a thumb.

STEP 2: A GOOD HORSE

A good team roping horse — that is not only in tune with its rider, but also with the steer — is necessary to win any team roping contest. “It’s very important to have a horse that knows what he is doing, so if the steer moves to the left, the horse will move with the steer to the left,” Sherwood said. To turn the steer, the header’s horse is generally taller and stronger. The heeler’s horse is usually more agile and able to quickly move into position based on the movement of the steer. 🐮

Team roping is the only rodeo event that is truly a team sport, and it is also the only one where men and women compete together. Like Matt and Walt, partners are often paired from across the country, yet still successful in competitions. “You, of course, find a partner that ropes good, but it has to be somebody you get along with because you will be working and traveling together for almost nine months,” Woodard said.



A roping saddle must have a sturdy design to handle the strength of the steer. It has a rubber wrap around the saddle horn to dally, or hold, the rope. “Once you realize you have an amazing horse that you are going to ride a long time, you make them a custom saddle,” Woodard said.



Roping gloves keep the rider's hands from getting burned by the rope.

The speed of your steer is a huge factor in whether you win or lose. "This steer was a nice steer — medium speed, which makes it easier to win than if you have a really fast or really slow steer," Sherwood said.

Horn wraps encircle the steer's horns to protect them from breaks and rope burns.

Walt Woodard (heeler) and Matt Sherwood (header),
2018 RODEOHOUSTON® Team Roping Champions

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