



"BOWLEGGED H" MAGAZINE

WINTER 2019 • VOLUME XXVII • NO. 4 • HOUSTON LIVESTOCK SHOW AND RODEO™





## "BOWLEGGED H" MAGAZINE

WINTER 2019 Volume XXVII • No. 4

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### ON THE COVER



Ryder Wright at the 2019 RODEOHOUSTON® Super Series Shootout, presented by Crown Royal.



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## from the CHAIRMAN OF THE BOARD

**T**he 2020 Houston Livestock Show and Rodeo™ is just around the corner and I am excited that we have officially reached another remarkable moment in Rodeo history.

After announcing our 2020 educational commitment of nearly \$27 million, the Rodeo's total commitment to Texas youth and education has officially surpassed \$500 million! It's thanks to our 35,000 volunteers, passionate Rodeo members and supportive Houston community that we've reached such an incredible milestone, and it's an honor to share this moment together.

The Rodeo has been dedicated to our mission of promoting agriculture and supporting Texas youth since we began in 1932. We built our mission on four pillars – agriculture, education, entertainment and Western heritage – and each of these pieces plays an important role in changing the lives of thousands of young Texans. Students are often

choosing paths that extend beyond the classroom, and many of our Rodeo scholars are gaining valuable hands-on experience by competing in our annual livestock and horse show competitions. To see so many Texans, of all ages, share our passion of promoting agriculture reminds me of the importance of our mission. Agriculture is part of our everyday lives, and I'm proud of the support that the Rodeo gives to students who are the future of such an essential industry. The experience our exhibitors gain at the Rodeo is second to none.

There will also be some exciting new exhibits and attractions on the Rodeo grounds in 2020. Our new "Born to Buck" exhibit will give attendees a better understanding of bucking horses, their athleticism and importance to the sport of rodeo. We'll also be introducing new fan engagement through

gamification, which will be integrated in the RODEOHOUSTON® mobile app. Gamification will allow our fans to earn rewards through visiting areas of the grounds and/or completing tasks. There will also be a parakeet encounter to explore in AGVENTURE, an Extreme Dogs show and a Rodeo social lounge, offering guests an interactive social media experience. The official name of the social lounge is in progress, and I look forward to sharing it with you soon. We're always looking for new opportunities to elevate our grounds and I'm proud of the work our team has done to bring these new experiences to the Rodeo.

As 2019 comes to a close, I hope you're able to enjoy time with your loved ones, celebrate the holidays and welcome the new year ahead. When we return in January, we will hit the ground running to wrap up our final preparations for the 2020 Houston Livestock Show and Rodeo. Thank you for everything you do to support the Rodeo, and let's get ready for another successful year. 🤠

All my best,

Jim Winne

Since its beginning in 1932, the Houston Livestock Show and Rodeo™ has committed more than \$500 million to Texas youth and education.

SCHOLARSHIPS .....	\$14,286,000
JUNIOR SHOW EXHIBITORS .....	\$8,309,250
EDUCATIONAL PROGRAM GRANTS .....	\$3,746,720
GRADUATE ASSISTANTSHIPS .....	\$652,240
<b>TOTAL.....</b>	<b>\$26,994,210</b>

## SCHOLARSHIPS

### GEOGRAPHIC SCHOLARSHIPS

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

### SPECIALTY SCHOLARSHIPS

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

### FUNDED SCHOLARSHIPS

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



# HOUSTON LIVESTOCK SHOW AND RODEO™ 2020 EDUCATIONAL COMMITMENT

## 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  
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  
Boys and Girls Country  
Breakthrough Houston  
Brookwood Community  
Camp For All  
The Center for Hearing and Speech  
Children's Museum of Houston  
Council on Recovery  
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  
The Hobby Center Foundation  
Houston Ballet Foundation  
Houston Community College  
Houston Grand Opera  
Houston Health Foundation  
Houston Hispanic Forum  
Houston Police Foundation  
Houston SPCA  
Houston Symphony  
Houston Zoo  
King Ranch Institute for Ranch Management  
Medilife Houston  
Memorial Park Conservancy  
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 Event Support  
• Leadership Development Events  
• State Leadership Conference and Area Conferences  
Texas Parks and Wildlife Foundation  
Texas Ranger Association Foundation  
Texas Tech University  
Texas Wildlife Association Foundation  
Theatre Under The Stars  
• Community Engagement Programming  
• 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 Developmental Disabilities  
UTHealth  
Writers in the Schools  
Yellowstone Academy  
YMCA of Greater Houston



# Framing the Future:

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## SEE TO SUCCEED

BY MARY BETH MOSLEY

Photos courtesy of See to Succeed

**I** **mag**ine if the world around you was blurry, everything from the pages of your favorite books to the faces of your loved ones. For most people the solution is simple — a trip to the optometrist for an exam and prescription glasses. But thousands of Houston boys and girls do not receive that help and see the world out of focus.



According to Robin Mansur, president and CEO at the Houston Health Foundation, a 2019 Houston Livestock Show and Rodeo™ grant recipient, 78,000 children in the Houston area fail vision screenings each year, but only about 50,000 receive the vision help they need. The Houston Health Foundation's goal is to provide essential health services to the children and families of Houston's most underserved communities. In 2012, the foundation started the See to Succeed program to bridge the gap and provide free comprehensive eye exams and corrective eyewear for children who do not have access to vision services due to cost or other barriers.

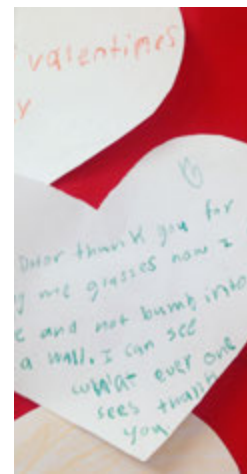
For these students, the problem goes beyond squinting at the chalkboard. Poor vision can mean poor performance at school, and 30% of children experience vision problems that can impact their long-term health and emotional and social development. According to See to Succeed Administrative Manager Maria De La Cruz-Morgan, "we'll hear stories from their parents who say, 'I thought my child had some sort of behavioral issue like ADD, when in reality they just couldn't see.'"

In 2018-19, See to Succeed treated a record 11,683 children. Most participants were second and third graders from Houston, Spring, Alief, Aldine, Fort Bend, Lamar Consolidated, Cy-Fair and Pasadena Independent School Districts.

Like the Rodeo, See to Succeed depends on volunteers. See to Succeed volunteers accompany students through every step, walking them through a screening process that includes tests for distance, color, depth perception and a comprehensive exam with a doctor. Two to three weeks after the screening, children receive their new glasses at school.

The 2019 Rodeo grant purchased about 4,000 pairs of new frames. "Picking out their glasses is their favorite part," Mansur said. "See to Succeed makes sure that children are given high quality frames and polycarbonate lenses, with a selection comparable to a private optometry office. As a result, they love their new glasses, which means they will want to wear them."

De La Cruz-Morgan pointed out how quickly new glasses transform participants' lives. "We did a study last year and looked at the children who came



through our program from 2012-2015. Eighty-percent of the kids who were failing math were now passing; 53% of the children who had disciplinary action had no further disciplinary action; and 52% of the kids who were chronically absent attended at least 90% of the following school year," she said.

"Of course, if kids are succeeding at school, their chances of succeeding at life, of going on to attend college and pursuing their desired career increase dramatically," Mansur said. Since the foundation started in 2012, See to Succeed has given 70,924 students new glasses and the chance to focus on a brighter future. 📖

# IMPROVING LITERACY

## FOR THE ENTIRE FAMILY

BY REBECCA MCGOVNEY-INGRAM

Photos by Linda Evans





**R**eading a good book can be a great way to pass the time, so a Houston Livestock Show and Rodeo™ committee is making it easier for students to do just that while at the Rodeo. The ladies of the Trailblazer Committee expanded their reading outreach program during the 2019 Rodeo with new lending libraries for young exhibitors. The signs on these libraries located around the Rodeo simply asked: “What are you waiting for? Take a book, it’s yours to keep.”

Trailblazer Committee Chair Jennifer Summerour said they wanted to reach out and help the students who spend so much time on the grounds when they are competing. “The kids are on our grounds at least 12 hours, maybe 14 to 16 hours a day. There’s only so many times you can go through the Rodeo and carnival. We thought the lending libraries were a great way for the junior exhibitors to spend their time,” Summerour said.

The libraries, based on the Little Free Library concept, were designed as small red barns to blend with the Western heritage theme of the Rodeo. They were in four high-traffic areas for student participants in NRG Center: near the Livestock Office, the Superintendent’s Office, Champions Row and the East Arena Office.

Trailblazer Committee leaders and members viewed the lending libraries as a natural expansion of the literacy program, Reading Opens the Path to Education Success (ROPES), which the committee started in 2014. “Literacy is one of the fundamental building blocks of a successful education,” Summerour said. “By making books readily available to school-age children, whether they are in elementary, middle or high school, we are able to help them develop the reading skills that are an essential part of their education.”

One Rodeo participant who utilized the lending libraries was Katie Atkeisson, a 17-year-old student from Kerens High School FFA who was showing her heifer, Rosie, for the first time. “The first day I was here, I noticed one of the libraries as I was walking by,” Atkeisson said. “I saw a book I had already read and I was curious.” Atkeisson said she was intrigued to see the libraries since reading is a big part of her life. She even reads books to Rosie to help the heifer

get used to her voice. Atkeisson was on Rodeo grounds for four days, approximately 12 hours each day, and said the lending libraries were a great way to help pass the time.

To build these libraries, Summerour said the Trailblazer Committee worked with Karl Hengst, director of Livestock Competitions, and members of the Buildings and Grounds Department. The project was financed with committee funds.

The Trailblazer Committee accepts book donations from other Rodeo committees and then donates them to local non-profits that focus on literacy and education for Houston-area students. The 47,000 books they collected this year brought their grand total of book donations for ROPES in the last five years to 177,000. Members of the Trailblazer Committee used 3,000 of this year’s donated books to restock the libraries several times a day during the Rodeo.

“The donations we received were an eclectic mix of books,” Summerour said. “We originally aimed for junior high and high school-level books, but we found we had younger customers as well. We started stocking those age levels in our lending libraries — oftentimes when you get those junior market exhibitors, you also get the whole family.”

The Trailblazer Committee will expand the lending libraries program with two new libraries in NRG Arena during the 2020 Houston Livestock Show and Rodeo. 📖





# FAST AND FURIOUS

**A**n event at the Houston Livestock Show and Rodeo™ truly brings the old west to life, where cowboys and cowgirls race on horseback while shooting at targets. In the fast-moving sport of Cowboy Mounted Shooting, horsemanship and marksmanship skills are tested at every turn.

It begins with the horse and rider circling one end of the arena as they evaluate the pattern that lies ahead. After receiving the signal, they are off in a flash; guns blazing at a full gallop that can easily reach 35 miles an hour. Together they fly past their targets as the rider attempts to shoot five 15-inch balloons. As they round the corner to return, the rider holsters one .45-caliber single-action cock-and-shoot

revolver and quickly grabs the second one to shoot the same number of targets on the way back. When all targets have been engaged, the rider crosses the timer line and the score is recorded. A penalty of five seconds is assessed for a missed target, a knocked-over barrel or a dropped pistol.

Each revolver is loaded with five rounds of specially prepared blank ammunition. The projectile is black gunpowder that is aflame when fired, which is what pops the balloon.

After each round, a team of volunteers from either the FFA or JROTC program runs out into the arena to replace the balloons for the next round. At the 2019 Houston Livestock Show and Rodeo™ competition, 30 members of the Air Force JROTC Fighting Falcons





## COWBOY MOUNTED SHOOTING SHOWCASES EXCEPTIONAL MARKSMANSHIP AND HORSEMANSHIP

BY SANDIE MARANUCCI

Photos by Meredith Flaherty

volunteered for duty. In return, they received a donation from the Rodeo to purchase equipment for their JROTC program.

The World Shows Cowboy Mounted Shooting event at the Houston Livestock Show and Rodeo attracts an increasing number of participants and spectators each year, like Curt Moore, a competitor from Paradise, Texas. Moore has been participating in Mounted Shooting since 2000 and conducts training and clinics at his Shootfire Ranch and across the United States. He is an active Level 6 Professional Cowboy Mounted Shooting Expert and placed first in the 2019 shotgun event in Houston. "I got interested in the sport 19 years ago after attending a Festival of the West event and I've been at it ever since,"

Moore said. "You need to be an expert shooter and an accomplished rider to excel in this sport. Competition can be fierce, but the people you meet and the friendships you make are what make it so rewarding."

A family-oriented sport, Mounted Shooting has a Wrangler category for children aged 12 and younger. These participants run the pattern and shoot from the ground with an adult partner under the watchful eye of the rangemaster until they are ready to participate as a contestant.

"The Houston Livestock Show and Rodeo is a prestigious event," Moore said. "The Horse Show Committee always rolls out the red carpet for us and we're already looking forward to coming back next year." 🤠







# LLAMAS & ALPACAS ON PARADE

BY ASHLEY PLAEGER

Photos by Meredith Flaherty

**I**t is often said the best is saved for last, and if you were to ask members of the Llama and Alpaca Committee, they would say the best event is held the last week of the Houston Livestock Show and Rodeo™. On the final Thursday of the Rodeo, the NRG Arena, which houses the Llama and Alpaca Show, is abuzz with activity. Tables are laid out with decorations and costumes. Llamas, alpacas and exhibitors weave in and out of committee members who are excitedly decorating golf carts in preparation to carry Rodeo leadership and donors. The animals are costumed, as are most of the people. Music is playing and the excitement is palpable. It is easy to discern that something special is about to happen.

Beginning in 1996, what was then known as the Llama Committee, decided to celebrate the start of their show by parading around a designated area of the Astrohalls. The initial parade was small, but it proved to be the perfect way to kick off the Llama Show. By 1998, the parade had grown in popularity and covered the entirety of the Astrohalls. Rodeo visitors would line up in anticipation for the parade and excitedly wave at committee members, exhibitors and animals. Over time and with changes to the committee and Rodeo, the llama parade ceased to exist. In 2009, then-Llama and Alpaca Committee Chair Emmett Story decided to bring back the parade and make it better than ever. With a little help from Rodeo leadership, the Llama and Alpaca Committee was invited to parade around the main walkway that surrounds the Astrodome to officially begin their

contribution to the Rodeo. In 2019, the llama and alpaca parade followed this route and featured more than 15 members of Rodeo leadership who rode in colorfully decorated golf carts, strategically placed between 35 costumed llamas and alpacas, and several Llama and Alpaca Committee members. Parade participants tossed beads, candy, trinkets and llama-themed goodies to spectators. One committee member said, "This is my favorite part of the Rodeo. I look forward to participating in this parade every single year."

Llama and Alpaca Committee Chair Jeff Alexander takes great pride in the unique way that the Llama and Alpaca Show begins. "I have been with the committee since 2003, and having the parade re-introduced as a part of our show has been a great experience, not only for our committee members and our exhibitors, but it helps to promote the Llama and Alpaca Show as well as RODEOHOUSTON®. Over the years, I have heard that several RODEOHOUSTON patrons had no idea there were other parts of the show taking place until they saw our parade. I feel that the llama and alpaca parade brings more awareness to how large the Rodeo really is. When I mention that I am part of the Llama and Alpaca Committee, usually people respond with a comment about how much they love to see our parade each year."

This year's Llama and Alpaca Show will kick off with a parade on the afternoon of March 19, 2020. It is a one-of-a-kind event that's enjoyed by people of all ages. 🐫

# Cowboys 4 Heroes

## FEED VETERANS

BY BRITTANY ROGERS

Photos courtesy of Cowboys 4 Heroes

A group that provides more than 100,000 meals annually only shops one day a year, thanks to the Houston Livestock Show and Rodeo™. That is exactly what Cowboys 4 Heroes accomplishes every March through the Rodeo's Junior Commercial Steer Sale. Cowboys 4 Heroes is a group of volunteers who work alongside the Rodeo and various Houston-area organizations to provide meals to veterans.



Charles Norris, left, with Greg Liles





From left, Monte Jones, a Junior Commercial Steer contestant, Greg Liles and Charles Norris


Cowboys 4 Heroes launched in 2010 when co-founders Charles Norris and Greg Liles wanted to help veterans by providing meals to those who are physically injured or transitioning out of active duty. Both men were first in their families to not serve in the military and they were compelled to give back to those who did. “Our military is one of the easiest groups of people to serve, they sacrifice so much for us and our nation,” Liles said. That spirit of giving has continued for 10 years.

Liles, Norris and the organizations that receive assistance from Cowboys 4 Heroes work together to establish meat and meal needs for the upcoming year.

“We only go shopping one day out of the year,” Liles said. And their grocery store is the Junior Commercial Steer Sale. “There is a coordination of what the needs are out there and what the pocketbook says we can buy. Every dollar that comes in goes to a soldier,” Norris said. Other buying groups believe in what Cowboys 4 Heroes does every year for veterans and they contribute to the cause.

It is not a short shopping list. This past year, Cowboys 4 Heroes purchased 43 steers, which amounted to 107,000 meals for veterans. Since they began, they have served more than 500,000 meals to veterans. Purchasing steers from the Rodeo is a

thoughtful, strategic move. Buying from the Junior Commercial Steer Sale supports and inspires FFA members while accessing the best possible meat. With the help of partners, they control the meat quality themselves — transporting, grading, processing and storing it to their liking. This massive, not-for-profit operation accomplishes its goals thanks to the support of volunteers, private donors, generous vendors and the Houston Livestock Show and Rodeo.

Ultimately, the intention is to continue serving soldiers across Texas and beyond. For the past nine years, Cowboys 4 Heroes provided nearly every meal containing red meat served at the PTSD Foundation of America’s Camp Hope. Camp Hope focuses on PTSD and mental health issues soldiers can face. Cowboys 4 Heroes has also provided meals at Fort Sam Houston (part of Joint Base San Antonio) for the last decade, coordinating a cookout with 25 chuck wagons cooking for nearly 10,000 members of the military and their families. “There is constantly a need out there, so we will be there to fill it,” Norris said. Cowboys 4 Heroes has a mission and heart that continues to drive their work. Catch them in action at next year’s Junior Commercial Steer Sale at the Houston Livestock Show and Rodeo. 



One of the hottest trends in the wine market today is the increasing popularity of canned wines. It's no surprise then that the Houston Livestock Show and Rodeo™ 2019 Rodeo Uncorked!® International Wine Competition awarded top honors to a Texas canned wine called Yes We Can Sway Rosé. For Rodeo Uncorked!, awarding a medal — a gold medal at that — to a canned wine is a first. And for Texas, producing a locally grown canned rosé is also a first.



# YES WE CAN



BY NAN MCCREARY

Photo courtesy of William Chris Vineyards

Yes We Can Sway Rosé is the latest venture of Texas grower-producers Chris Brundrett, co-founder of William Chris Vineyards, and Andrew Sides, co-founder of Lost Draw Cellars.

“My partner and our wives have always talked about doing a project together, something outside the realm of our brands,” Brundrett said. “We all love rosé, and we’re big outdoor people. So, we wanted to produce a Texas wine that would be accessible in more scenarios.

We also saw an opportunity to share Texas-grown wines with the world and putting wine in a single-serve can is a great way to give something a try.”

The Rodeo award-winning wine is 100% grown in the Texas High Plains, and includes 32% Mourvèdre, 32% Carignan, 15% Muscat, 10% Viognier, and 11% Malvasia Bianca. The producers describe the wine as “medium-bodied and incredibly aromatic on the nose. Peachy in color, the wine itself has hints of guava, passionfruit, fresh strawberries and honeysuckle, leaving the palate with a crisp, refreshing finish.”

The wine captured its gold medal as Class Champion and Texas Class Champion in the category of Dry Domestic Rosé Under a \$20 Price Point — an impressive honor for a competition that featured 3,156 entries from 18 countries, including Argentina, Austria, Chile, France, Italy, Japan, Portugal and South Africa,

as well as 413 entries from Texas wineries.

Yes We Can Sway Rosé is just one of hundreds — if not thousands — of canned wine brands that are contributing to an \$81 million business in the United States.

“Canned wines are gaining in popularity because they are a convenient package that’s easy to carry around, throw in a cooler with bottled water, beers, etc. and they fit with people with an active lifestyle,” said Carl Chargois, vice chair of judging for Rodeo Uncorked!® “These are people who hike, bike, go boating or just take a walk in the park and have a leisurely picnic and want to take a small can of wine with them to enjoy while they’re on the go.”

Chargois added that canned wines are a perfect alternative for places that do not allow glass, such as parks, amphitheaters and waterfront areas like beaches or rivers. Canned wines also appeal to consumers who simply want to have one glass of wine rather than open an entire bottle. Plus, they are recyclable. As for taste, experts claim that an aluminum can does not affect the flavor of the wine. “Technology has changed so much that the cans have an inert coating that doesn’t react with alcohol or acid in the wine,” Chargois said. “It is a very clean product with no opportunity for oxidation or bacterial infection.”

Houston-area consumers can purchase these canned wines at area grocery stores. 🍷

# RODEO, NASA HELP TEXAS HIGH SCHOOLERS REACH FOR THE STARS

BY NATALIE HARMS

Photos courtesy of NASA

**S**arah Brubaker's goal was always to land at NASA and the Houston Livestock Show and Rodeo™ helped her on her mission.

Brubaker realized her aerospace dreams at a young age, and thanks to NASA's High School Aerospace Scholars (HAS) program, hosted by the Johnson Space Center (JSC), she was able to realize her childhood goal could become a reality.

"Over that summer, I fell in love with NASA," Brubaker said. "What was really amazing about HAS was that I kind of left with a plan and what I needed to do to make it happen — go to college, what to study, what internships I needed."

The HAS program begins with a 16-week online course that Texas high school students complete during the school year. From that group, HAS invites 270 of the best students to one of the six week-long summer camp programs filled with hands-on learning, mentorship and inspiration.

Thanks to the support of the Houston Livestock Show and Rodeo, it is completely free. "With the Rodeo's funding, we're able to provide an online and on-site experience to students across the state of Texas at no cost to them," said Jessica Cordero with NASA's Office of Science, Technology, Education and Mathematics (STEM) Engagement.

This past summer, the program was one to remember. July 20, 2019, was the 50th anniversary of the Apollo 11 Moon landing and the 20th year of the NASA and Rodeo partnership. This partnership supports the HAS program and training for the Artemis generation, NASA's future explorers, with the goal of sending American astronauts to the Moon







and to Mars. This past summer, students were able to celebrate this historic anniversary. “Apollo-era briefers came out and spoke to the students,” Cordero said. “We had pieces of Apollo history to share with the students this summer.”

Along with mentorship and instruction from NASA scientists and engineers, the students worked 12- to 14-hour days to plan a mission to Mars, build and launch a rocket, and more. “It’s a truly rewarding experience that helps to shape participants’ decision on what STEM-related degree they will pursue in college,” Cordero said.

During the six days, the students also learn about career paths, internships and even scholarships — and Brubaker took advantage of all three opportunities. With her plan solidified at HAS, Brubaker enrolled as an aerospace engineering major at The University of Texas at Austin. After an internship at NASA during college, she graduated in 2010 and began her career at JSC. Almost 10 years later, she is still living out her NASA dream and works on the team managing transportation to and from the International Space Station.

While the entire HAS program was influential for Brubaker, there is one moment she remembers changing her path. At the program’s closing ceremony, Brubaker and her dad were seated at a table with a representative from the Rodeo who told them all about the scholarship opportunities the organization provides. “Most people would think that the NASA part of my goals was going to be hard,” Brubaker said. “But, I knew that for me, graduating debt-free was going to be harder.”

Armed with the information about Rodeo scholarships, she applied and received a scholarship that allowed her to not only accomplish her dreams of launching herself toward NASA but also doing so without carrying excess cargo in the form of student loan debt. Brubaker now serves as a huge advocate for both HAS and the Houston Livestock Show and Rodeo. She serves as a mentor for the summer program and also volunteers on the Rodeo’s Speakers Committee. “I really felt called to give back since the Rodeo scholarship was so influential in my success. I wanted to give back and share my story,” she said. †

# THE *Trailblazing*

BY MARINA OLSON

Photos by Meredith Flaherty

## TRAIL BOSS

A common saying among those involved with the Houston Livestock Show and Rodeo™ trail rides is “all trails lead to Houston.” There are currently 12 trail rides, with more than 2,000 participants. But, only one ride has the distinction of being led by a woman. Rosetta Gray is in charge of the Southwestern Trail Ride. Her assistant trail boss, Elizabeth Cook, is also female, so there can be no doubt that women are the fuel that fires this particular ride.

Gray has been involved with the Southwestern Trail Ride since 1981. “I moved here from Mississippi, met a guy who rode on a trail ride, and he invited me to go,” she said. “The first year, I rode in one of the wagons, but as soon as the ride was over, I bought a horse!” From there she continued working toward the goal of becoming the trail boss and leading the ride. 2019 marked Gray’s 12th ride as trail boss, her duties first began in May 2007, and her first ride was in 2008.

The Southwestern Trail Ride was officially chartered in 1974, when the Houston Livestock Show and Rodeo was still known as the Houston Fat Stock Show. The ride begins at the Stephen F. Austin monument in West Columbia, Texas, and spans 123 miles on the way to Houston. The trail riders meet the Saturday before Rodeo events kick off at NRG Park. The route leads the riders along major highways, so it is the work of the scouts and police escorts to ensure everyone’s safety while participating. There are approximately 250 riders involved, with 10 wagons accompanying the riders on horseback. The wagons carry supplies including bedding, personal items and everything needed for cozy dinners around the campfire. Often overlooked

is the amount of work, both physical and mental, that goes into the successful planning and execution of the annual trail ride. This is where Gray shines.

While she knew right away that she wanted to get more involved, Gray did not realize at the time that she would be making history by leading the Southwestern Trail Ride. Gray is “thrilled to death” about her position as trail boss and now fully recognizes the significance of what she is doing. As she rose up the ranks within the organization, she took notice of Cook, another strong female presence on the ride. Gray knew that if she had the opportunity to be in charge, Cook was someone she would want by her side.

Cook, the current assistant trail boss, has been involved with the ride for 30 years in different capacities and may have the opportunity to take over as trail boss, should Gray ever choose to give up the reins. “Rosetta and I complement each other well as she’s very firm, and I’m not as much,” Cook said. “She rides the full trail, where I tend to make sure I’m reachable by the leadership and that each campsite that we use along the way is cleaned up and ready for the next group.”

These women are paving the way for hopeful female trail bosses everywhere. It is certain that Gray, Cook and those they are leading will leave a lasting impression on the future of the Southwestern Trail Ride. †









# A Dairy DOZEN

BY SARAH BROCK  
Photos by Lisa Norwood

**S**pending Saturdays at Memorial Villages Farmers Market can be a weekly tradition for many families. Kids chase one another down aisles and tug at their parents, clamoring for a sweet treat. Young couples lazily wander between booths, stocking up on fresh pasta and flowers. With more than 50 vendors and nearly 3,000 visitors each Saturday, the weekly market is a Houston community staple, one that owes its start to the Houston Livestock Show and Rodeo™ and the dedication of one large rodeo-loving family.





The Carlson family have always been avid attendees of the Rodeo, but the path to launching the farmers market can be traced back to mom LeeAnne's passion for the livestock show.

"We budgeted every year to go to the Rodeo," LeeAnne said. "I got hooked on livestock judging, and I'd just watch it for hours. When we moved to the country, I knew I wanted to show."

She decided she wanted to work with goats, a decision that changed the trajectory of her family, which includes husband Tim and their 12 children. The brood bought a herd of goats and began showing at livestock competitions across the state.

But, the goats quickly became more than just show animals. In 2008, the family opened Swede Farm Dairy and began making milk, yogurt and goat cheese. The family sold their products at farmers markets across the state, then partnered with First Congregational Church of Houston to launch the local farmers market in Hunters Creek Village.

As the dairy took off, LeeAnne and Tim continued to take their 12 kids to the Rodeo each year, a tradition that started when their oldest daughter, Katarina, now 31, was just one year old.

"One year, my parents planned a trip to Virginia in March, and we were like, we can't go — that's rodeo season," Katarina said.

As Katarina's love for the Rodeo and agriculture grew, she decided to get more involved. In 2011, she became the first family member to become a volunteer, first joining the Sheep and Goat Committee, then joining the Tours Committee two years later. The rest of the family quickly followed suit, and LeeAnne, Tim and every Carlson child who is age-eligible has volunteered on a committee or



joined Jr. Rodeo. "Rodeo has changed our lives and completely redefined everything," LeeAnne said. The family has collectively served on 10 different committees, in addition to providing the goats for Goat Mountain, an exhibit that's part of Fun on the Farm.

As the oldest children have started to grow up and move away, the Rodeo has provided an opportunity for the family to reconnect each year. Christin Hall, the second oldest of the Carlson children, moved to Ohio after getting married, but she returned last year to continue volunteering.

"Returning reminded me why I joined the committee — to educate kids and see that light in their eyes when they learn about chickens and cows," Christin said.

With such a large family of volunteers, the month of March can be chaotic. The family has a system to track shifts and concert attendance. Each day, one van of Carlson volunteers leaves around 5 a.m. with a second car coming later.

"If we didn't have the Rodeo, I guess we'd be lost," Tim said. "There's a member of our family at the Rodeo every day."

While the family has contributed countless volunteer hours to the Rodeo, perhaps their biggest impact is seen in the parking lot at First Congregational Church of Houston every Saturday where local farmers and business owners gather.

"There's \$1.5 million a year in the local economy because of this farmers market, and it wouldn't be here if I didn't get hooked on livestock showing," LeeAnne said. "Every vendor here has a place to build a business because of the Houston Livestock Show and Rodeo." Now that is a Rodeo family! 🐾





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