

It's Rodeo Time

Fort Bend residents saddle up for fun at the Houston Livestock Show and Rodeo

Written by Julie Dold

First started by seven men with a passion for rodeo, the Houston Livestock Show and Rodeo (HLSR) has since grown to include the efforts of more than 26,000 enthusiastic and dedicated volunteers. From tasting delicious funnel cakes to experiencing the bull riding, Fort Bend families love everything about the rodeo. It's no wonder the HLSR, celebrating 80 years, has become the world's largest rodeo! "The heart of the show hasn't changed in 80 years," shares HLSR Chief Operating Officer Leroy Shafer. "It's still a celebration of the spirit of the West and our community, wrapped around an unrivaled agricultural, educational, and entertainment event."

showing her horse Bailey in the paint horse show. "She loves to be the center of attention," remarks Martin. "Bailey has a very outgoing, look-at-me personality."

Barbecue, Mutton Bustin', and Music

To help kick start the HLSR, you can have a finger lickin' good time at the World Championship Bar-B-Que Contest. Last year, the show set a record with 244,184 people in attendance. The event is three days long and attendees can enjoy cooking, competition, eating, and dancing.

One event that cowboys and cowgirls of all ages enjoy is mutton bustin'. Riders attempt to ride mutton - or sheep - and stay on as long as they can. Think of it as bull riding, only on a much smaller scale. If your little one is between 5 and 6 and doesn't weigh more than 60 pounds, sign them up! Don't forget to enter your Texas 4-H or FFA member in the calf scramble, as well. They could win a \$1,500 certificate to purchase a registered beef heifer, dairy heifer, or market steer.

No show could be complete without a live performance at the end. Spectators can see many of their favorite country, pop, or rock groups. This year's line-up includes Alabama, Brad Paisley, and Big Time Rush. Be sure to check the schedule

Planning Makes Perfect

Planning for the show begins a little over a year in advance. At the end of each year's show, the HLSR staff, management, and 100-plus committees evaluate it and discuss how they can make the next one even bigger and better. "We continually evaluate what works, what our spectators enjoy, and what our on-site surveys reveal about what makes our show a success," explains Shafer.

A Love of Agriculture and Livestock

Fort Bend resident and HLSR participant Beth Martin began her livestock days when she was in high school by showing a lamb in FFA. The money she got from it was used to buy a quarter horse named Aggie. She has been showing horses for over 15 years now, the past 10 of which she has spent

before you go to see if your favorite singer will be chiming in.

Unlike Any Other

The show could not be such a success without all the families and friends that attend every year. Spectators come for a number of reasons and can enjoy so many one-of-a-kind experiences. Martin's musts include sampling fried Oreos, getting a halter made with her horse's name on it, and watching the horse show.

So come on out and cheer on your favorite athlete in the rodeo competition, take a spin on your favorite carnival ride, learn about agriculture and livestock, or take the kids to one of the many kid-friendly activities. It's sure to be a boot-scootin' good time! **SLM**

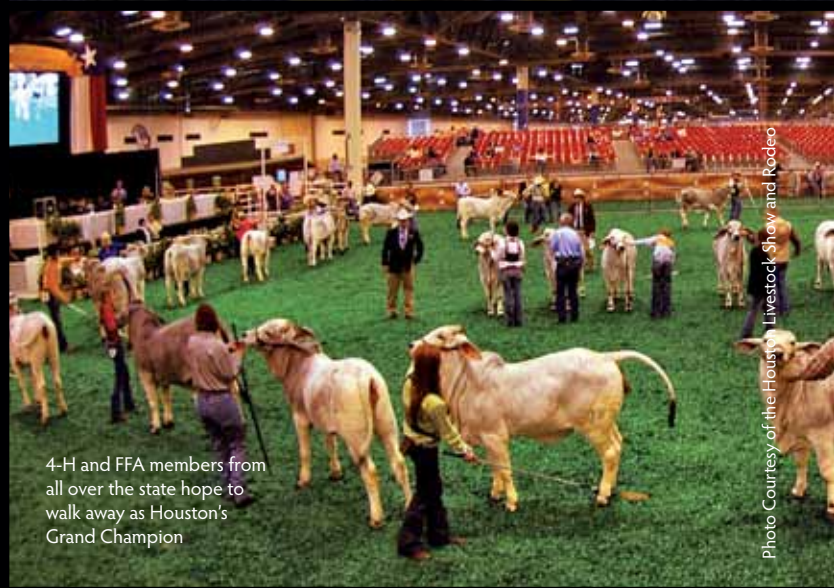
JULIE DOLD enjoys being the editorial coordinator for Sugar Land Magazine and remembers having a blast at her first rodeo with her dad many years ago.

The Houston Livestock Show and Rodeo runs from **Feb. 28 to March 18**



Photo Courtesy of the Houston Livestock Show and Rodeo

More than 100 committees begin planning for the Houston Livestock Show and Rodeo over a year in advance



4-H and FFA members from all over the state hope to walk away as Houston's Grand Champion

Photo Courtesy of the Houston Livestock Show and Rodeo



Riders and horses must work together as a team during barrel racing, one of the top sports at the show

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