

Holyoke prepares for junior rodeo

Written by Chris Lee



Carolyn Koberstein holds one of the saddle covers that will be given to winners of the junior rodeo that will be held June 25-27 in Holyoke. —Enterprise photo

Holyoke is sure to liven up the weekend of June 25-27 when numerous young rodeo contestants and their horse trailers roll into town for the Colorado Junior Rodeo Association (CJRA).

This will be the second year Holyoke has been on the schedule as kids ages 5-18 will take to the arena at Phillips County Fairgrounds over the three-day weekend.

Gale Wiebers estimated nearly 1,500-2,000 people attended last year's rodeo over the two days and expects the same if not more this year. He added they ran over 3,000 runs last year.

"I think the greatest sight I have ever seen, was watching them go through town," Carolyn Koberstein said referring to the numerous trailers and cowboys. She noted it was very interesting seeing the numerous trailers and campers parked out at the fairgrounds.

Putting a rodeo such as this on isn't something that happens overnight. Wiebers said it takes nearly \$3,000 and help from anyone willing. He added the CJRA sends a lot of help and surrounding communities assist, as well.

Some of the behind-the-scenes jobs include creating stalls in the show barns, grooming the arena, installing tanks and building the chutes.

"It's putting Holyoke back on the map again," Koberstein said referring to the large group of

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people who show up. She added this is a way to get kids involved.

Wiebers said while attending the finals last year, many people talked about the good time they had in Holyoke at the junior rodeo. He also said he heard it was a top notch rodeo for being the first one held in Holyoke.

Wiebers is one of the main factors behind getting the rodeo to Holyoke. He originally was trying to organize a five-state high school shoot out and had everything in place when different states began to back out, ultimately killing the event.

Wiebers said Holyoke would've seen thousands of people come into town if that would've been a success.

"I think he (Wiebers) needs a big round of applause," Koberstein said. "I think he's still a kid at heart."

Those who are on the Phillips County rodeo committee include Loren Hendrix, Jeff Tharp, Chuck Dvorak, Pat Wiebers, Gene Kumm, Gale Wiebers, Eldon Heermann and Carolyn Koberstein.

"It's just a good time to watch those little kids have a good time and earn their points," Koberstein said.

Rodeo is something that runs through both Wiebers' and Koberstein's veins. They have been involved some way or another as long as they can remember.

Seeing all the action at last year's junior rodeo took Koberstein back to when she was a little kid, she said.

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Koberstein grew up with rodeo in Flagler and remembers her grandpa saying her belt buckles were bigger than she was. "Winning buckles is a moment you have for life," she added.

Wiebers said he began with rodeo around 1960 and made his way to the national finals riding bulls before getting hurt. "I rode with the big guys," he noted.

The CJRA was established in 1994. The goal of the organization is to provide a quality event allowing youth to advance their rodeo talent in the spirit of fair competition and the appreciation of good sportsmanship.

Membership includes over 2,000 youth between the ages of 5 and 18 with members in Colorado, Wyoming, Kansas and Nebraska. Wiebers said membership isn't required to participate in the upcoming junior rodeo and those non members who would like to participate will be charged a fee.

Towards the end of the season, nearly \$110,000 worth of cash, prizes and scholarships will be awarded to about 200 members who qualify for the finals. Finals qualification is based on total money and points won at all of the rodeos. Wiebers said the overall winner at last year's finals walked away with around \$10,000 in scholarships and prizes.

The junior division will be held Friday, June 25 beginning around 6 p.m. at Phillips County Fairgrounds. The complete rodeo will be held Saturday, June 26 and Pee Wee and Senior division will be held Sunday, June 27. Each will begin at 9 a.m. There is no admission fee for the public to attend and watch.

Wiebers and Koberstein also wanted to thank all of the local sponsors who helped make the rodeo possible. They said there wouldn't be a rodeo if it wasn't for those sponsors. They also appreciate the help from local authorities, ambulance crew and the Phillips County Commissioners.