



MUSTANG AT 50...

Western Days extends city milestone celebration

**By Traci Chapman,
Staff Writer**

On Oct. 17 the city celebrates a major milestone greatly anticipated by officials, business, residents and organizations alike – the 1969 signing of its charter, an action that Mustang officially Mustang.

Before that blowout birthday party, there's Western Days, and organizers were not about to let that celebration pass it by – thus, this year's theme, "Mustang – 50 Years Strong" was born.

"At the city we're counting down until we officially celebrate Mustang's birthday – we've got a lot of special activities planned," City Manager and Chamber of Commerce chairman Tim Rooney said. "It's exciting to look back to the time it all started and reflect on how far the city and the community have come and just where we're headed in the future."

In fact, "Mustang 50 Years Strong" is all about the Mustang of the past, while celebrating its present and future, chamber CEO Renee Peerman said. In addition to traditional favorite activities like Kiwanis pancake breakfast, Mustang Public School District's western stampede, Oklahoma Mustang Club's annual car show, rodeo, cutest cowboy and cowgirls taking the stage during the Friday night chili cook-off and much more, new offerings would be on hand to add a little something to the two-day event.

"We'll have the Canadian County cornhole championship, as well as cowboy storyteller and strolling guitarist Wayne Cantwell for the first time," Peerman said. "Sen. Paul Rosino is also sponsoring the JOM group from Mustang – as far as I know, this will be the first time we have involvement from any of the Native American groups.

"They will be having demonstrations and storytelling at Wild Horse Park and will be walking in the parade," she said.

JOM groups are part of a program made possible by the 1934 Johnson-O'Malley Act, created to subsidize educational needs of Indian students.

Two city charter signers – Don Trull and Loren Smith, as well as Wynona Trull, are expected to serve as this year's parade grand marshals, continuing the 50th birthday theme, Peerman said.

For organizers who meet throughout the year, this is go time, the end of a long process that involves a lot of moving parts, Peerman said. Several committees encompass the two-day event, set this year for Sept. 6-7.

Western Days actually kicks off with a 10 a.m. Friday storefront decorating contest Friday night features the annual chili cook-off on the front lawn of Town Center, concurrently featuring best dressed

cowboy/cowgirl competitions and gospel music, while the Stampede Car Show hosts a hospitality event in anticipation of its Saturday exhibition and contests.

Mustang Roundup Club also gets in on the celebration early, as it holds its first of two nights of open rodeo, beginning at 8 p.m. Friday in Mustang Rodeo Arena.

Saturday activities start bright and early, as Mustang Kiwanis begin serving up their traditional pancake breakfast at 6:30 a.m. until 10:30 a.m. at Mustang Methodist Church, while over at Mustang High School's Bronco Stadium, elementary, intermediate and middle school students from throughout the take part in the Stampede 5K Run, while also includes a 5K run, all benefitting Mustang Pacesetters Club and Mustang High School cross-country.

At 10 a.m. what for many people is Western Days' annual kick-off activity, the parade, heads down state

Highway 152.

Throughout Saturday, a host of activities take place in Wild Horse Park, at First Baptist Church and more, Peerman said.

Evening activities begin at 5 p.m. with the start of the chuck wagon cook-off, located near Wildhorse Gardens and Market, and the rodeo returns for its second night at 8 p.m.

"It's a big job to coordinate all of this and we are so thankful to all of our partners, sponsors, volunteers and everyone who helps to make Western Days such a great event, year after year," Peerman said. "To be a part of the city's birthday and show we're Mustang strong makes it all that much better."



-photos by Traci Chapman