

Booster Club members offer home away from home

By KAREN CAMPBELL
Press Reporter

Horse lovers can usually remember that first time they needed an extra boost to make it into the saddle and begin what would become a lifetime of riding. Perhaps inwardly shaking and trying to hide it, perhaps overly confident and testing independence, the novice rider could count on someone with experience providing strong hands that simultaneously guided, provided a safety net, and knew when to intervene and when to let go.

The University of Tennessee at Martin Rodeo Team is long past those early moments that led to the saddle bronc riding, bare back riding, bull riding, tie-down roping, steer wrestling, team roping, barrel racing, breakaway roping, and goat tying for which they are now known. But the need for a little extra help now and then outside the arena is always appreciated.

That's when the UTM Rodeo Booster Club steps in. Led by Katie White, now in her ninth year as club president, the Martin-based group provides everything from meals and housing, and helps with animals to behind the scenes support ensuring this week's rodeo will once again vie for the Ozark Region's "Rodeo of the Year," a recognition that's been UTM's claim for more than a decade.

Katie, having grown up in the rodeo world, understands how to strike the balance between filling a "mom" function and making first-time adventures as emerging adults fun. She is there to help raise funds for scholarships via barrel-racing fundraisers she and husband Jamie produce with the help of booster club members as well as see to it that the team gets a booster club-prepared meal once a month, ads for the rodeo program are sold, auction items are collected, T-shirts are created, and all the activities for rodeo week are covered by team members and volunteers.

"We give the team a second family to lean on," she explains of the environment booster club members help to create. "When they [rodeo team members] come to school they are independent for first two weeks and then reality hits. With rodeos, schoolwork, no mom and dad ... it's overwhelming. The booster club adopts them. If they want to talk, have a meal; if they want to ride or practice, we won't take mom and dad's position but we are here, and they don't have to worry. If mom and dad is far away, we are here."

Booster club members are filling the positions visitors to the rodeo see at every corner of the what has become one of the largest college rodeo events east of the Mississippi. But before the week arrives, members like Steve and Winnie Taylor have not only sold ads for the rodeo program, Winnie also has cooked lots of meals for the kids, and Steve hires several to work at his place.

Club member Mike



Katie White, center foreground, with the 2018-2019 UTM Rodeo Team

Pierce can be seen closing the chutes for the rodeo while wife Jackie is selling T-shirts or "anything they need us to do," she said.

During additional events like the UTM Winter Series, produced as a donation by the Whites' company JK Productions, the Pierces help feed the staff, and along with other club members, fill various roles throughout the four weekends that raise \$10-12,000 each year.

"The kids are the draw. They are away from home. If they need us, we can be there," Jackie explains of the bond between booster club and rodeo team members. In addition, she notes, "We've got horse sense, and if we don't know how to do something, we know someone who does."

Some club members have arenas where team members can practice. Some have livestock they loan for honing their sport.

Barbara and James Davis offer their home. For 23 years, they've housed more than 300 team members in their 5-bedroom house off of Old Troy Road outside of Martin and in the two trailers they keep on their property just six miles from campus.

House parenting came as the result of a request from a desperate cowboy who called a couple of decades ago and asked if they had

ever considered renting the chutes for the rodeo while wife Jackie is selling T-shirts or "anything they need us to do," she said.

After he moved in and the enterprise exploded with as many as 10-12 residing there at any given time, the couple learned that "living at home" was exactly what they wanted.

Supper is always provided by Barbara. Breakfast and lunch are grab-and-go and leftover affairs. And most days, the house is full with either those renting or other team members who are dropping by.

"They think this is their home, which is what we want them to do," Barbara shared. "They raid the refrigerator. My husband's tools are there for the taking ... and the returning. They always show back up."

Booster club members for 50 years, since just after the group was formed, the roles the couple has claimed don't end at room and board. Housing horses and providing life lessons are also included. Barbara confesses that one boy still has problems with the washing machine as he is learning to do laundry, and James reminds her of one of the young women whom she's taught to cook.

Laughing at the recollection, she recalls that one of

her cooking students went home for Thanksgiving determined to prepare her family's holiday dinner.

"She was on the phone with me all day long, but she got it done," Barbara proudly noted then concluded, "We've had some experiences, I'm telling you."

Last year club members' commitment translated into the club raising nearly \$24,000 which resulted in \$18,000 going directly to scholarships and the remainder used to purchase a four-wheeler, water wagon, and roping dummies as well as helping roof the practice facility.

The club's impact is immense in comparison to the membership size - 50 members with around 15 that are "really active," Katie says, however adding, "Some can't come for everything, but I know they can come for certain events like cooking crawfish. We may not see them all the time, but they come for the one thing, and we count on them. That's their job."

With accolades continuing to mount for the annual rodeo and scholarships continuing to be distributed, one might say, "and a job well done."

The 51st annual University of Tennessee at Martin Spring College Rodeo is set for today (Thursday) through Saturday at the Ned Ray McWhorter Agricultural Pavilion and NW (Doc) Robinson Arena. The UT Martin Rodeo, which has been spotlighted as the Ozark Region's "Rodeo of the Year" for 13 straight years, begins at 7:30 p.m. on all three dates.

your orange awning team

FULLER PARTNERS
REAL ESTATE, INC.

731-587-3157
www.fullerpartners.com

The Best Team For All Your Buying, Selling & Auction Needs!

Cub Cadet SALES EVENT **DAYS** APR 28-MAY 15

ULTIMA SERIES

\$100 OFF

THE ULTIMATE ALL-AROUND MOWING EXPERIENCE

<p>XT1™ 42" Bring more life to your lawn with a 42-inch stamped twin-blade deck and a 22 hp** Kohler® V-twin engine. Square tubular steel frame and next-level comfort come standard.</p> <p>EVENT PRICE \$2,599* * REFLECTS \$100 OFF *</p>	<p>XT2™ 50" Step up to a 50-inch reinforced fabricated AeroForce™ triple-blade deck, a 23 hp** Kawasaki® FR Series V-twin OHV engine, a stronger transmission, arm rests and larger rear tires.</p> <p>EVENT PRICE \$3,599* * REFLECTS \$100 OFF *</p>	<p>XT2™ LX42" Unlock your lawn's potential with a 42-inch stamped twin-blade cutting deck and a 22 hp** Kohler V-twin OHV engine. Includes Premium Performance Package features.</p> <p>EVENT PRICE \$1,899* * REFLECTS \$100 OFF *</p>
--	--	---

FOR FULL PRODUCT SPECS **Cub Cadet** VISIT CUBCADET.COM

Cub Cadet YOUR INDEPENDENT DEALER - EXPERT SERVICE. LOCALLY OWNED.
The advice, service, selection and support you need to find the right fit for you.

Martin POWERSPORTS

103 N. Lindell St., Martin • 731-271-5262
Monday thru Friday 9am-5pm and Saturday 9am-12pm or until last customer is served
martinpowersportstn.com, like us on facebook

1. Cub Cadet Days Save \$100 Sales Event is \$100 off regular price of all Ultima Series and XT2 Enduro Series, and is not valid on other models. Offer valid 4/28/19 - 5/15/19 at participating dealers. Cannot be combined with any other offer.
2. Restrictions apply. See store for details.
* Product Price - Actual retail prices are set by dealer and may vary. Taxes, freight, setup and handling charges may be additional and may vary. Models subject to limited availability. For full warranty details, visit cubcadet.com or see your local dealer. See your local dealer for limited warranty details and information. Certain restrictions apply. Specifications and programs are subject to change without notice. Images may not reflect dealer inventory and/or unit specifications. **As rated by Kohler, all power levels are stated in gross horsepower at 3600 RPM per SAE J1940 as rated by engine manufacturer. As required by Kawasaki, horsepower tested in accordance with SAE J1995 and rated in accordance with SAE J2723 and certified by SAE International.
© 2019 Cub Cadet. CDDAYS_ULT_ST_0

Weakley Ford

www.weakleyford.com

"Your Ford Dealer for Over 50 Years"

731.587.3141
800.748.9712
841 N. Lindell St.
Martin, TN 38237

Weakley Nissan

www.weakleynissan.com

The Alexander Family and Weakley Ford Nissan supports our UTM Rodeo Team

731.587.3141
800.748.9712
841 N. Lindell St.
Martin, TN 38237

"Your Nissan Dealer for Over 30 Years"