

Living a Life of Service - Freddie & Mary Hudson
By Lea Anne Russell, Elizabeth Stampede Volunteer

The Elizabeth Stampede is an all volunteer rodeo with more than 275 volunteers from all walks of life who come together with a common purpose – to put on the best rodeo possible.

For the last 25 years, one of those volunteers was Freddie Hudson. Joined 12 years ago by Mary, his wife of 39 years (40 in August), Freddie has a hand in the behind the chutes action and Mary is integral to the community relations committee. The Hudson family is part of the fabric of the Elizabeth Stampede, and in recognition of their contributions Freddie and Mary have been named the 2017 Elizabeth Stampede Pioneers.



Family and friendships have defined the Stampede experience for the Hudsons. It started with an invitation to “come have fun” from other long-time volunteers, and has been a driving force for these two. “Every year, we renew our connections from past rodeos and you really do make lifelong friendships. Our favorite part of the rodeo is simply volunteering and the camaraderie that comes with it.”

The Hudsons have lived in Elizabeth since 1986 and have five children and eight grandchildren. The volunteering spirit has extended to the rest of the family, and daughters Sara and Allison are both committee chairs for the Stampede. Son-in-law Jimmie volunteers with Freddie and works behind the chutes, where they help sort, strip equipment, and have a hand in the welfare of the livestock. “It’s great to have them involved, because it’s the younger generation that will carry on this western tradition.”

Mary’s contributions extend throughout the year, helping with the Foundation, tickets, the Stampede to Read program and the VIP program. All of those programs, she says, “involve helping people enjoy their rodeo experience, sometimes for their first time. The kids, during the reading program, get such a kick out of learning about rodeo from our clown and they get so excited about reading.”

Freddie adds, “There are so many connections here that extend outside of the arena. Take for example, rodeo contestants who compete against each other then turn around and support their competitors. This is just one big family. There is so much fun in it, even when you are working very hard.” When considering where the love of rodeo and volunteering came from, we didn’t have to dig much further than both Freddie’s and Mary’s life of service. Both served in the Army and Freddie was a volunteer fireman for 20 years with the Rattlesnake Fire Department. “People are at their best when they are serving others,” Freddie comments and Mary agrees.

An insight into the love for the western life is exemplified by Freddie’s passion for western movies. “This is a window into the past; I think of the similarities every time I see an old Western. This way of life is still alive in many areas of our country, where

people use these skills not for entertainment, but for their day-to-day livelihood. This is how our country started. It was a bare country, with a blend of cultures that had to depend on each other to make it work. That is where we are at the Stampede.” Freddie continues, “We have been an integral part of rodeo and western history. I have talked to people who would like to be involved, but may feel they won’t fit in. My message to those folks is “come join us!”

Freddie and Mary exemplify the true rodeo spirit, with service, optimism and plain hard work.

The Elizabeth Stampede Rodeo honors Freddie and Mary Hudson, our 2017 Stampede Pioneers, for their dedication, contributions and their commitment to service.