

2018 Elizabeth Stampede Pioneer
Susan Johnson
By Lea Anne Russell - Elizabeth Stampede Volunteer

Our rodeo is rich in history. The rodeo we know today evolved from a small rodeo in 1965 featuring “wild cow milking” to one of the Professional Rodeo Cowboy’s Association’s (PRCA) best small rodeos. Our history is attributed to the hard work of hundreds of volunteers and their pioneering spirit. Celebrating and honoring our Pioneers is a Stampede tradition, and this year, we are pleased to honor Susan Johnson.



Susan began volunteering with the Elizabeth Stampede in 1989 – a year after rodeo leaders voted to change from a local amateur rodeo to a professional rodeo. “When I first started working with the rodeo, the Stampede office was located in the wooden building we currently serve cocktails from. As the rodeo grew, we added a Rodeo Secretary’s trailer and additional infrastructure,” Susan comments. These improvements carry over to the Community Rodeo which is held prior to the Stampede, and the Concert which is now in its third year, both of which she supports. “The work for the rodeo is a year-round process but it really increases in the weeks leading up to the rodeo.”

As our rodeo accountant, Susan works with the ESR Board and every rodeo committee – there are currently 16 – and exemplifies the spirit and the dedication of our volunteers. Jace Glick, ESR President, describes it this way: “This rodeo is an exciting mix of every type of talent. We have people from rodeo and ranching families who understand livestock and don’t hesitate to jump in to help with the bulls and broncs. We have people who love to work with spectators and entertain them. And behind the scenes, we have an exceptional talent who helps pull it all together. Susan Johnson has established budgets and processes that add a business acumen warranted by a professional rodeo. We are thrilled to honor her this year for her contributions that make us better every year.”

Susan came to the rodeo via St. Louis and then New Orleans. She moved to Colorado in 1974 with her high school sweetheart after they married and saw an opportunity to bring a fresh seafood market to an untapped market. “Seafood Unlimited” led to other business ventures including a natural foods store in Idaho Springs and the establishment of Accounting, Business & Computer Solutions, which she currently owns and operates. This entrepreneur eventually moved to the area when the opportunity to live on a 100-acre ranch presented itself and 25 years later she’s still here!

In the late 1980’s, she worked with the Elizabeth School District and Chamber of Commerce, where some members were active in the rodeo. This included longtime supporters and past pioneers Don and Leanna Morgan, who asked her to join them. “I love

being a part of the rodeo. The camaraderie and the people really exemplify the community,” says Susan. “There are so many great memories, like the time a bull got out from the rodeo pen and ran down County Road 17 ending up in a lady’s back yard. All of the cowboys on horseback went after it and brought it back to the arena. She watched the whole thing out her kitchen window while doing dishes!”

This self-proclaimed “rock-n-roller” is new to country music and is enjoying the change. Susan comes from a family that embraced some cowboy traditions. Her Paniolo (Hawaiian cowboy) father was born on Maui after his grandparents moved there in 1887 from the Azores Islands off Portugal. As a young man he “did it all on horseback” helping on his Uncle’s cattle ranch and a sugar cane plantation. In the mid-1940’s he met a woman from St. Louis who had moved to Maui to teach and she couldn’t resist his cowboy charm. It is perhaps sharing this adventurous spirit that has led Susan to where she is today. “The Stampede is a great organization. It opens up possibilities for a lot of people to contribute to an event that brings us all together. I love my rodeo family; they have been there for me through all of the good and bad times, proving that every day is an adventure and a challenge.” Meeting those challenges together is what makes the Elizabeth Stampede a family.

The Elizabeth Stampede Rodeo honors Susan Johnson, our 2018 Stampede Pioneer, for her dedication, contributions, and her commitment to service. Thank You!