

Western Legacy Through and Through

CELEBRATING OUR ELIZABETH STAMPEDE PIONEER OF THE YEAR



"I enjoy the Stampede family," Maher said. "All of the volunteers really try their best to put on the best rodeo for all of the fans and contestants. Every year keeps improving with hospitality or with the grounds and it makes it a better experience. Every year it gets better."

~ RICKY MAHER ~

2023 Elizabeth Stampede Pioneer

Ricky Maher moved to Elbert County in 1987 and has attended the Elizabeth Stampede every year since. Growing up in a small farming community in northeast Iowa and later moving back to Elbert County in 1998, Norm Almquist — a neighbor and volunteer for the local rodeo — roped him into lending a hand. What began as helping with the roughstock and facilities committees evolved into a lasting impact on western legacy in the small-town community.

Fast-forward 25 years later, Maher has impacted the rodeo and local community in more ways than one. "Ricky's contribution to the success of the Stampede is immeasurable," said Elizabeth Stampede president, Traci McClain. "Year after year, he makes sure our rodeo is in tip-top shape. He is always quietly working behind the scenes and has many jobs finished before anyone else even realizes they needed to be done."

Throughout his time volunteering, he has been named the "MVP" for numerous committees, received the Top Hand Award in 2011, acquired his gold card representing 20 years of volunteering in 2019, and received the highest honor one can receive in the Elizabeth Stampede — the President's Award — in 2010.

When the lights flick on and the stands are buzzing, he is on the ground in front of the chutes in the role of "Chute Boss." Amidst the roughstock events, he is keeping the cowboys and stock in order, making sure the announcer is in the know, and helping to ensure that each performance runs smoothly.

Maher has also played a hand in numerous projects on the rodeo grounds including the new west entrance for contestants, the arena crow's nest (with the aid of Ron Ullery, Dennis Nolan, and others) and new bleachers, which he recalls painting many nights after work with Nolan. He was also an integral part of reconfiguring the stock pens to create an

alleyway, creating the scoreboard platform, and most recently, putting in new sand for better footing in the arena.

Outside of the rodeo, Maher has worked for American Civil Constructors (ACC) for nearly 35 years, acquiring the position of Operations Manager for the Mountain West Division in 2000. ACC has also been a proud sponsor of the Elizabeth Stampede for over 25 years, providing supplies such as water trucks, personnel, and other equipment needed to maintain and improve the rodeo grounds.

This "anything is possible with a bit of elbow grease" attitude and love for the western community extends far beyond the reach of Casey Jones Park. Raising four children within the rodeo world, with the help of their mother Teri, he was heavily involved in a number of different local organizations including the Kiowa-based Little Britches Youth Association, where he held a presidential title within a seven-year contribution on the organization's board. He and his children, along with other board members, were also a part of founding the LBYA drill team, which has since evolved into the Blazing Saddles Drill Team and is known for their choreographed routines during each rodeo performance.

To encourage youth involvement in rodeo throughout the community, Maher was also a founding board member for the Elizabeth High School Rodeo Team, now known as the Eastern Plains Rodeo Team. The group is a part of the Colorado State High School Rodeo Association and the Junior Rodeo Association, both of which host competitive rodeos around the state for 300 junior high and high school age competitors.

From the moment he planted roots in the Elizabeth community, his hard work and persistent involvement have bettered it — the true mark of an Elizabeth Stampede Pioneer.