

Old West Ambassadors

ARIZONA'S WILD WEST HERITAGE IS A COMPELLING PART OF ITS HISTORY, BUT EQUALLY FASCINATING IS THE COMMUNITY PRIDE AND UNITY IT IGNITES. HERE'S A GROUP THAT WILL GET YOU UP IN THE SADDLE AND SHOUTING A "YEEHAW" BEFORE THE DAY IS DONE.

Story by Rebecca Lane



THE HARD WORK AND DEDICATION of the Cowgirls Historical Foundation proves that giving back to the community doesn't have to be a boring feat; in fact, the Cowgirls put on quite a show. The Cowgirls bring Arizona's exciting past back to life, performing in rodeos and parades, and participating in community volunteer activities and educational programs for children. The group's mission is to "increase public awareness, appreciation and preservation of America's Western heritage and equestrian lifestyle," says Julee Brady, public relations representative for the foundation.

Brady says that all of the women in the group are "women of accomplishment...who strive to give back to the community, share their love of horses and respect our Western heritage." In the past, the Cowgirls have participated repeatedly in the Tournament of Roses Parade in Pasadena, Calif., the Tucson Rodeo and a plethora of charity events, like Catwalk for Charity and the Special Olympics. This month, the Cowgirls will bring their love and enthusiasm of the Wild West to the Lost Dutchman Days Rodeo, the Florence Crittenton Luncheon and Fund-Raiser and the Tucson Rodeo Days Rodeo and Parade.

Following tradition, at this year's Rodeo Days Parade, the Cowgirls will ride atop their noble steeds on dazzling vintage silver saddles. Not to be upstaged by their mounts, the Cowgirls will wear collectable rhinestone-studded vintage Western ensembles that pay tribute to the era of Hollywood Glitterati.

"Many parts of history [were] written on the back of the horse," Brady says. "We strive to show respect for the history of the horse because it presents a connection to the past, and having better awareness of our past gives us better knowledge for the future."

Participating in both the Lost Dutchman Rodeo held Feb. 21 through 24 and the Tucson Rodeo Days Rodeo and Parade on Feb. 16, the Cowgirls' flag drill team is a reliable crowd pleaser. Sleek, strong horses propel the women through this intricate and blood-pumping choreographed dance. With powerful riding and first-rate horsemanship,

the Cowgirls evoke the strength and beauty involved in the equestrian lifestyle.

"One thing that is unique about our performance is that we have our horses run with 30-foot-long multi-colored ribbons," Brady says. "These colorful ribbons trail behind the horses as they gallop, creating a kaleidoscope of color."

Despite much time spent on horseback, not all of the Cowgirls' work takes place in the saddle. Early this spring, the Cowgirls will attend and champion the Florence Crittenton Luncheon and Fund-Raiser, which plays a vital role in galvanizing support for this organization dedicated to caring for young women who are pregnant or parenting.

Dressed to the hilt in their signature multi-colored hats and trademark apparel, the Cowgirls will assist the chairmen of the event in tasks from greeting attendees to selling raffle tickets. "We are honored to donate our time to organizations such as Florence Crittenton that create better opportunities for women and children," Brady says.

The Cowgirls Historical Foundation also sponsors children's educational programs that strive to share Western traditions via interactive plays, workshops and a one-of-a-kind fashion show. The event is a unique display wherein the audience learns the history and lore of Western couture and legend.

With countless educational outlets, community service and volunteer activities, and participation in local and national Western events, the Cowgirls' dedication to preserving Arizona's cultural history ensures our Wild West past remains remembered. ■

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