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Team 355 takes the reins in helping the community

By Paul G. White



Photo by Marie Baxter/ Reno Rodeo Foundation

More than 75 participants from Team 355 entered the MS Walk.

Folks around these parts know the Reno

Rodeo's long-standing reputation as the "Wildest, Richest Rodeo in the West." It's 10 of the most action-packed days and nights of professional saddle bronc, bareback and bull riding, team roping, and steer wrestling this side of the Rio Grande.

But the action doesn't end after the fairgrounds go dark and all the cowpokes mosey on home.

More than 300 volunteers who help produce the Reno Rodeo dedicate the remaining 355 days of the year giving back to the community. That's how they got their name — Team 355.

“These are the kindest, most hard working, incredible people — you just feel honored to work with them,” Reno Rodeo Foundation Director Marie Baxter said.

“They are always there for the community.”

Throughout the year, members of Team 355 pull on their boots and take part in numerous community events, including the Nevada Day Parade, the Evelyn Mount Food Drive, the Salvation Army Holiday Bell Ringing and the Sparks Hometowne Christmas Parade. They also field huge “Cowboy Up for a Cure” teams for the MS Walk, Moms on the Run and St. Jude's Radio-Thon.

Team 355's goal is to be present for at least one community event every month of the year. During the past year, Team 355 created two new events: the Reno Rodeo Blood Drive and the Reno Rodeo Denim Drive.

The inaugural Reno Rodeo Blood Drive was held this spring at the Atlantis Casino Resort Spa.

With the help of local radio and television stations, Reno Rodeo Team 355, in partnership with United Blood Services, collected 27 pints of blood in only four hours.

“It was so successful that it definitely will be an annual event — it might be more than annual,” Baxter said.

The first Reno Rodeo Denim Drive also was a phenomenal success for Team 355. The three-week program helps gather denim clothing and new cotton socks and underwear for abused and neglected infants, children and teens in Washoe County.

At the end of the Denim Drive — just two weeks before Christmas — Team 355 had collected 1,017 pairs of jeans, 2,322 pairs of underwear, 3,774 pairs of socks, 14 denim jackets, 45 T-shirts and 73 outfits for toddlers and infants, as well as nearly \$7,000 in donations, which was used to buy additional clothing for the children.

“Team 355 really is a family. We enjoy giving back to the community, and we come from all different backgrounds,” Baxter said. “We always invite new people to join our family.”

For more information on volunteering with Team 355 or any of the 43 other rodeo committees, call Marie Baxter at 775-851-3505 or log on to the Reno Rodeo Web site at www.renorodeo.com.

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