

## **EDITORIAL**

### **GO OUT TO THE RODEO!**

**JANUARY 29, 2009**

Any native of Bexar County and San Antonio knows every February brings in the Rodeo season! When patrons of the Rodeo prepare for their attendance, they often think only of bull riding, calf roping, farm animals, and country/western music for entertainment. Few think of educational tools, scholarships, and agricultural awareness. There is so much to the Rodeo that escapes our minds.

South Texas has historically been coined as “cattle country”. The first Texas agricultural fair was held in the heart of Bexar County in San Antonio in 1854. The success of this fair attracted numerous fairs in subsequent years bringing a newly established attraction to the Bexar County area and an increase in the economical flow stemming from tourism. Turnout for the fairs and surrounding events in Bexar County warranted a need for a large facility to host the schedule of events and those attracted by the festivities.

Joe Freeman, a Texas native and rancher, not only led the initial movement for Bexar County to attract the fairs and events, but was instrumental in the search for an appropriate spacious venue. Joe Freeman’s inspiration came from his two main focal points; youthful minds of Texas and the agricultural and livestock industries. Motivated by Joe Freeman’s dedication, many residents of Bexar County, including his fellow rancher and brother Harry Freeman, became involved in his journey and volunteered to follow in his movement to build a state of the art, multi-purpose coliseum. Freeman’s coliseum movement began in the early 1940s and after almost a decade, the Joe and Harry Freeman Coliseum opened its doors to the public in September 1948.

The First Annual San Antonio Stock Show & Rodeo began its fair in Bexar County on February 17, 1950. More than 250,000 patrons flooded through the Coliseum setting a history making record for an opening show and establishing a huge success rate for educating the patrons on the importance of agriculture and education.

Motivated by his effortless journey, the executive committee for the San Antonio Livestock Exposition (SALE) proactively reached out further to the younger generation by developing a SALE Scholarship Fund in 1984. Local 4-H club members and Future Farmers of America (FFA) students were strongly supported in the development of their agricultural interests and found themselves with a newly established opportunity to pursue an education focused towards agriculture. Since inception, the SALE Scholarships Fund has grown from more than \$90,000 in scholarships to more than \$8.3 million in scholarships funds, grants and endowments raised by the more than 1.3 million patrons who participated in the 2008 Stock Show and Rodeo. These scholarships successfully assist committed young agricultural minds in their educational journeys.

Let us remember our youth because their generation is our future and join me in the kick-off of the official 2009 Rodeo season beginning February 5<sup>th</sup> through the 22<sup>nd</sup>. February 6<sup>th</sup> is “Official Dress Western Day” for Bexar County and San Antonio so put on your boots and western gear and get out to the Rodeo! See ya’ll there.