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Rodeo Austin: Blue Ribbons, Buckin' Broncs, and Big Dreams

Liz Carmack

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Who would have dreamed that a one-day calf show would evolve into a top-five professional rodeo that raises millions of dollars for education? From its beginnings as a tiny 4-H event to its current role as one of Austin’s largest charities, the Star of Texas Fair and Rodeo has grown in both size and purpose in the past seventy-five years.

Here, Liz Carmack tells the story of Rodeo Austin, a nonprofit enterprise whose face reflects its agricultural heritage but whose scholarship program is at the heart of its mission. Since 1981, when organizers became fully committed to providing college scholarships, millions of dollars have been raised through a year-long fundraising effort including a sporting clay tournament, golf tournament, wine tasting and gala. The year culminates in March with the organization’s signature event known as Rodeo Austin - sixteen days of non-stop events, including a livestock show, fair, rodeo, and concerts. Over the years, dedication and hard work, an ever expanding cast of participants and volunteers, many benefactors, and changes in name and venue have served the organization well. In 2011, the Star of Texas Fair and Rodeo welcomed more than 300,000 attendees and awarded $442,000 in college scholarships plus more than $1.5 million in additional funds to Texas youth.

Fans of rodeo everywhere, and especially anyone who has attended Rodeo Austin—“Where Weird Meets Western”—will come away from *Rodeo Austin: Blue Ribbons, Buckin' Broncs, and Big Dreams* with a new appreciation of the Star of Texas Fair and Rodeo and its dual mission of promoting youth education and preserving Western heritage.

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