



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Estelle Johnson retires from the Top Hands

ELLENSBURG, WASH – After 26 years, Estelle Johnson has announced her retirement from the Ellensburg Rodeo Top Hands Association (Top Hands) effective February 28, 2015.

The Top Hands organization was formed in 1988 by the Ellensburg Rodeo directors to work all year long with the directors to produce one of the finest rodeos year after year. Estelle, one of the earliest Top Hands, has been an integral part of the tremendous effort volunteers put forth every year to host a world class Old West rodeo.

Besides working hard to produce the rodeo, Estelle has been active in promoting the rodeo through riding in parades throughout Washington State, and then for 16 years being the force and chairperson behind the Ellensburg Labor Day Parade held every Saturday before Labor Day.

Estelle has held several positions with the Top Hands and recently served as president for 2012-2013. Additionally, Estelle received the rodeo's highest honor, the Driver Award, in 2010, to recognize her significant contribution to the Rodeo and community.

Her tenure with the Top Hands has involved activities that ranged from stripping the wood from farm buildings throughout the valley (with permission) to serve as the façade of the Western Village, the entrance to the Rodeo, to demolition to assist in the building out of the Clymer Museum and then later the Driver House, which serves as the Rodeo's Main Street ticket and administrative office.

"Estelle has been a valuable asset to the Rodeo and will be extremely missed. She has been a major part of our success and history. It will be hard to replace her pleasant smile, energy and enthusiasm," said rodeo President, Gene Dana.

This year's rodeo runs from September 4 – September 7, 2015. More information about its many competitions and events can be found online at www.ellensburgrodeo.com.

The Ellensburg Rodeo is one of the "old rodeos" and has earned its place as one of America's Top 10 professional rodeos. The Ellensburg Rodeo hosts the World Finale of PRCA's Xtreme Bulls Tour. Started in 1923 with the same volunteer spirit that still "fuels the fire" of today's volunteers, the rodeo has grown from a local competition among ranch hands to the Professional event of today with over 600 contestants and prize money in excess of \$400,000!

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