



**P**ull on your boots, grab your hat and head to the Lakeland Civic Center January 19 - 20, to experience rip-roarin' rodeo action in what promises to be a weekend full of non-stop excitement as the 6th Annual Americom Pro-Rodeo Classic, presented by MidFlorida Federal Credit Union, stampedes in to Lakeland.

Head back to the wild-west and watch as cowboys take on rough stock from the 4L Rodeo Company, one of the most outstanding rodeo stock contracting companies in the southeastern United States with stock that has been featured at the Wrangler National Finals Rodeo. This event is in its 33rd year and is sanctioned by the PRCA (Professional Rodeo Cowboy's Association) for world championship points.

Rodeo Promoter Leroy Mason brings years of experience to Lakeland. "We want to make this the biggest PRCA Rodeo east of the Mississippi," said Mason. He began his rodeo career in high school, where he began honing his promoter skills by putting on a high school rodeo. But the fun didn't stop there. After participating in a variety of rodeo events, Mason went to work for Loretta Lynn's Longhorn Rodeo. He also had stints owning his own rodeo companies, before settling down as the General Manager of Westgate River Ranch in River Ranch, FL, where a rodeo is held each Saturday night. The Saturday night rodeo is a true family affair with Mason's 14-year-old son, Grant, taking charge of the rough stock.

The festivities kick off with a cattle drive through downtown Lakeland, Friday, January 19. The drive starts at 10:00 AM from Lakeland Cash Feed, 502 Lake Mirror Drive and will proceed through town. Friday is WPCV Family Night at the Rodeo. Two children will be admitted free with each paid adult admission.

Saturday night, the Americom Pro-Rodeo Classic is proud to participate in the Tough Enough to Wear Pink campaign to raise money to support the fight against breast cancer. During the Saturday night performance the goal is to fill each seat in the

Lakeland Center with a rodeo fan in a pink shirt. While the color pink may not be something you associate with the rough sport of rodeo, breast cancer has touched the lives of many rodeo families. The Tough Enough to Wear Pink campaign keeps this important health issue at the forefront at rodeos across America. When you purchase your ticket for the Saturday night performance be sure to mention CODE PINK. So come show your support and be Tough Enough to Wear Pink.

Professional rodeo consists of two types of competitions, rough stock and timed events. The rough stock events consist of bareback, saddle bronc and, rodeo's most popular event, bull riding in which a contestant's score depends on not only his performance, but the performance of the animal as well. The cowboy must stay aboard a horse or bull, trying everything in his power to dislodge the rider, for eight seconds. Doesn't seem like a long time? Tell that to the cowboy!

In the timed events, steer wrestling, team roping, tie-down roping and barrel racing, cowboys and cowgirls compete against the clock and each other. The goal is to post the fastest time in a particular event.

The common story is that rodeo was born in 1864 when two groups of cowboys from neighboring ranches met to settle an argument over who was the best at ranching tasks. This first gathering started the evolution of what is most assuredly the only sport that derived from an industry. While today's cowboy is a bit different from his 1800's predecessor, the ideals and showmanship are still valued today.

Sponsors that help make the event possible include, the United States Army, Wrangler, Dodge Trucks, Bernie Little Distributors, Mahindra Tractors, Harrison Water, Barry Motor Sports, Polaris, and Arctic Cat.

So pack up the family and head to Lakeland for Polk County's largest wild-west extravaganza for what is sure to be an action-packed weekend. *Let's Rodeo!*