

**RODEO
HANDS**

FOR COWBOYS, BY VOLUNTEERS



File photo

Rodeo board member Jon Gill nails up part of the façade on the mercantile building while other volunteers work on other portions of the building during a July 2017 work party at the new rodeo arena.

Getting arena ready for show takes an all-hands approach

Behind the scenes of this year's Farm-City Pro Rodeo, hours of work from members of the Hermiston community were dedicated to making this show happen, with nothing more than passion and the promise of a great rodeo driving them.

People of all sorts of backgrounds and generations, some as young as 20, have spent roughly four nights a week since April working on getting the rodeo ready for another top-notch season.

Volunteers are what keep this rodeo up and running.

"People call us, wanting to be involved," said David Bothum of the board of directors. "They come in and work their hardest. This community is unbelievable."

One of the most impressive accomplishments from the volunteer crew this year is the construction of a brand new mercantile building, which houses the Chute 8 Whiskey taps, local markets, and an in-progress Farm-City museum. When finished and open for business, the museum will display old rodeo memorabilia donated by the community.

"We wanted something to keep ahold of this place's rich history," said Jon Gill, also on the board of directors, though he said the project is still a work in progress.

The building took approximately 100 volunteers and 12 weeks to complete.

"Some of these people might not have known much about construction at first, but they gave it their all," Gill said. "People didn't believe we could get it done, but we did."

Volunteers also built new pens for livestock, and consistently kept the grounds fresh and fertilized.

And that's just before the gates open. During the rodeo, volunteers of all ages will continue to dedicate their time and effort. Ticket sales and parking are run by members of the community, and youth sports organizations man the concessions stands.

As a way of saying thanks, funds raised by the rodeo are donated to keep youth athletics going.

"Everything we do is to give back to the community," Bothum said.

It's safe to say that the volunteers are what keeps the rodeo alive, and their hard work certainly doesn't go unnoticed.

"Without this group, none of this could have happened," Gill said.