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Mutton Bustin' at the Belton 4th of July Rodeo

One of the most popular highlights of the annual Belton 4th of July Rodeo is a very special event for the youngest participants, Mutton Bustin'. Always a crowd pleaser, seeing these young cowgirls and cowboys ride sheep for as long as they can hold on while the animal runs and jumps around the rodeo arena is an experience that brings the loudest cheers.

Each night of the rodeo features up to 15 riders, all vying to be the champion who scores the highest. Scoring is based on the length of time they stay on the sheep, as well as the judges' assessment of their overall ride. Just like the cowboys who ride the bulls and bucking broncs, the sheep vary in their speed and jumping abilities. Some riders can hold on for only a brief time while others have more extended rides, adding to the excitement.

Children ages 4-7 weighing under 55 pounds are eligible to sign up in advance for this exciting event. Each year there is high demand for the limited slots available. Participants receive tickets to attend the rodeo as well as a commemorative Mutton Bustin' shirt. Sign-ups this year will be on Thursday, June 11.

Some children are understandably nervous about their first ride but soon find out the thrill of the ride is worth overcoming their fear. Safety is a high priority for every rodeo event, including Mutton Bustin', so the young riders are outfitted with protective equipment including a helmet and vest.

"We always look forward to the sign-up event to see the enthusiasm our youngest fans bring to the rodeo," stated Randy Pittenger, Belton Area Chamber President/CEO. "Then on each night of the rodeo, the anticipation of their big ride brings out many cameras from supportive family members and friends. Just like our other rodeo participants, their event might only last a few seconds but the memories they make will last a lifetime."

Mutton Bustin' is one of many events at the rodeo, featuring family friendly entertainment. This will be the 102nd consecutive year for the annual Belton 4th of July Rodeo, held July 2-4 in the air-conditioned Huntington Bank Expo (formerly known as the Cadence Bank Center, and more commonly known as the Bell County Expo). Opening night on Thursday, July 2 is Hometown Heroes Night, honoring local first responders, healthcare, and education professionals. Friday, July 3 is Military Appreciation Night. Closing out the rodeo is Family Night on Saturday, July 4 that includes the KPA Engineers Stick Horse Stampede.

For more information about the rodeo and other Belton 4th of July Celebration events, visit the website at www.beltonchamber.com, call 254-939-3551, or email info@beltonchamber.com. ###