



Background Release

Contact:

Terry Wheatley
209.483.4768

Are You Tough Enough To Wear Pink?

Campaign to raise awareness and funds rallies for breast cancer rallies western community at rodeos across the country

Hughson, California, 2006. This summer, American rodeos will be seeing pink—and lots of it—to fight a deadly disease. All over the west, the challenge has gone out...are you tough enough to wear pink? And when it comes to cowboys fighting breast cancer, it seems clear the answer is yes! Tough Enough To Wear Pink is the brainchild of

Terry Wheatley, an entrepreneur with deep roots in the western community and herself a breast cancer survivor. It has grown to be one of the most creative and visible awareness campaigns in the country.

How it all began.

In 2004, Terry was looking forward to attending the Wrangler National Final Rodeo in Las Vegas as she had for many years. Her son Wade Wheatley was a consistent WNFR finalist in team roping (header) and her husband Jim had been a six-time WNFR team roping qualifier himself. Terry was a senior executive at a major wine company sponsoring the WNFR telecast.

But Terry had recently undergone breast cancer surgery and, although things looked positive, it was on her mind. She had lost her grandmother to breast cancer, her mother had a double mastectomy before the age of 40, and her daughter Katie had undergone two surgical biopsies before the age of 20. What's more, Karl Stressman, Director of Special Events for Wrangler and her close business associate, was dealing with its devastating impact, as his wife Val struggled with the disease.

"It seemed as if everyone I knew was affected," recalls Terry. "I felt a very strong need to somehow take action."

Terry realized from her own situation that early diagnosis and treatment was key to a successful outcome. She toyed with some ideas to rally the rodeo and western community to get that message across. And then the big one hit. What if, on one night of rodeo's greatest spectacle, the competitors could be convinced to wear pink shirts? Not a color normally associated with rugged events such as bull riding and steer wrestling, but that was the point. That was how to make a statement. Broadcast on national television, no less. All she had to do was make it happen. In three weeks.

Rodeo world to the rescue.

Finding pink cowboy shirts proved to be the next challenge. Enter Karl Stressman of Wrangler who just happened to have pink shirts in production for the Spring 2005 line. Problem was they weren't scheduled to be delivered until the new year. With a few strategically placed

phone calls, Karl arranged a special rush production of 200 shirts to be air-freighted directly to Las Vegas just in time for the rodeo.

Terry needed to get the challenge out to the cowboys—and fast. The Professional Rodeo Cowboys Association (PRCA) jumped in to help, disseminating information about the pink shirt campaign to the finalists. Son Wade did his part to spread the word, too, risking locker room ribbing from his fellow cowboys.

“I gladly accepted the challenge in support of my mom, but I sure couldn’t predict what the others would do. After all, it was a pink shirt.” explains Wade.

And he might very well have been the only cowboy wearing one that night. Wade wasn’t sure—nobody was— if the world’s toughest cowboys would rally to the cause. Would they be Tough Enough To Wear Pink?

That question was answered once and for all as competitors and spectators turned the Thomas & Mack Arena into a sea of pink that night. To the thrill of Terry, Karl, and everybody who helped make it happen, one after another, pink-shirted cowboys galloped into the arena, sporting the color of breast cancer awareness. The campaign received plenty of media attention, spreading the word even further.

Bigger and better.

The movement grew in 2005, with iconic American brands and Wrangler NFR sponsors including Justin Boots, Coors, Dodge, Jack Daniel’s, Las Vegas Events, Montana Silversmiths, Professional Choice, Resistol Hats, the PRCA and others joining forces to make Tough Enough to Wear Pink Night at the WNFR even bigger. Competitors, rodeo clowns, announcers, flag girls, sponsors, fans, even horses were decked out in pink to show support and raise awareness.

Since then, the entire western community has embraced the idea with passion.

In 2006, hundreds of rodeos across America are supporting some form of Tough Enough to Wear Pink and other breast cancer fundraising and awareness promotions.

Now retired from her wine executive position, Terry, daughter Katie, and Wade’s wife Lacey run a successful western boutique, Wheatley’s Western Living, in their hometown of Hughson, California. It’s also Tough Enough to Wear Pink central, as the Wheatley women coordinate the efforts of the western industry partners to support individual rodeo committees.

“The calls come in daily from all parts of the country,” comments Katie. “Every committee and western event has great ideas that we try to get up on the Web site as soon as possible so we can share with others.”

From a single idea to a nationwide movement, Tough Enough To Wear Pink continues to gather speed raising awareness and funds to fight breast cancer, cowboy style. For more information on Tough Enough to Wear Pink rodeo events around the country, please visit the Web site at www.toughenoughtowearpink.com.

###

