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## Michigan High School Rodeo Association

by Monica Wiggers

My name is Monica Wiggers. I'd like to tell you about the Michigan High School Rodeo Association. I've been involved with it since 2010 when my oldest grandson joined during his senior year in high school. Anyone in grades six to nine at any school (even home schooled) can join. The Michigan team consists of kids from all over the state including the Upper Peninsula, and neighboring states like Indiana and Ohio. It's a state Association where you pay annual membership dues and then pay entry fees for the events in the rodeos you want to attend. Rodeos are held throughout the state.

It's the only high school sport where you can earn scholarship money. You earn the money by points based on how you place in rodeo events and by how involved you are in the association. High school seniors then have a scholarship interview where the amount of each award is decided. The more rodeos you attend the better your chances are. Each year, in January or February, the Association sponsors a Cowboy Prom, where the scholarship awards are announced.

The rodeo season runs from August 1 to July 31 every year. The top qualifying four kids from each event in the Junior Division and in the Senior Division attend the National event, which is the largest rodeo event in the world. This year, 46 states with high school teams will attend, along with teams from Australia, Mexico and the four provinces of Canada. Opportunities are offered at Nationals for students to visit with college representatives who recruit for their rodeo teams. It's a very busy week with two rodeos for each child in each event. On the following Saturday they have the short go where the top 20 in each event compete for the final championships.

They have a big volleyball tournament open to everyone, and dances for the kids. They treat the kids like celebrities. I've been fortunate enough to attend five Nationals with my grandchildren: three senior high rodeos in Gillette, Wyoming and Rock Springs, Wyoming; and two junior high rodeos in Lebanon, Tennessee. The location for Nationals changes every two years. It's a wonderful experience.

The events that they can compete in for junior high include girls' barrel racing, pole bending, goat tying, ribbon roping, team roping, breakaway roping, and the princess contest. For boys in junior high they have breakaway roping, goat tying, ribbon roping, chute dogging, tie-down roping, bull riding, saddle bronc steer riding, and bareback steer riding. They also have .22 light rifle shooting for both boys and girls.

The senior high events for girls are: pole bending, barrel racing, goat tying, breakaway roping, team roping, and the Queen's contest. For the boys: bull riding, bareback bronc riding, saddle bronc riding, team roping, steer wrestling, and tie-down roping. Senior high also has .22 light rifle shooting and trap shooting. They also have reined cow horse and boys' and girls' cutting.

Yes, parents, you will probably spend a lot in

membership fees, entry fees, travel expenses, and everything else, but at least you get something back in this sport -- some scholarship money, and every little bit helps. But what I like about this sport is the family time you spend together. You're usually part of the kids' training, not just watching them from the stands and cheering them on. It also teaches them so much. What you see in rodeo is great support for each other even though they're each there to win. They're still helping and cheering each other on.

They have to maintain grades in accordance with the state regulations for sports, and they have to demonstrate good conduct. Parents can set the standards higher if they choose. The kids have the responsibility of taking care of their gear and their animals and they find out that not everyone wins, but that's okay. You pull up your bootstraps and you try a little harder and you're still winning if you just improve your time a little bit and do your best. They learn some life lessons and make some lifelong friends, sometimes from all over the world. Rodeo is like a family. A good example is how everyone helps everyone else out. Last weekend, it was cold. One person forgot his heater. Another person had an extra one, so they shared it with him and someone else. So it's not just the kids who are supporting each other. It's the parents and grandparents and everyone there.

They hold clinics now and then to help the kids improve and to teach the new ones. It's a great experience for those who aren't familiar with the rodeo world. The Reed City Youth Rodeo is the only training rodeo in Michigan. I have a granddaughter who wants to start High School Rodeo. Next year, she'll be in 6th grade. She's not as confident with the horses as her cousins, so we're going to start her in the Reed City Youth Rodeo so she can learn. They train on Saturday and hold a rodeo on Sunday. They have awards at the end of the season, as does the high school. It's a little cheaper than the High School Rodeo it's a \$50 membership fee and \$5 per event. It's a good way for them to learn. The group is all volunteers; even the stock is donated, so they can keep their costs down.

We're going to start Katie in the Reed City Youth Rodeo this year and see how she's doing by August. If she's ready for the high school rodeo in the junior high division, we will start her there. Otherwise, we'll do another year in Reed City and get her ready. It's all good as long as she's learning and having fun. And the Reed City Youth Rodeo is for all ages, from little tykes starting on sheep to sixteen-and-seventeen-year-olds. You're never too old to learn something new. You can learn more about both these rodeo associations if you go to <https://reedcityrodeo.com/>. or [www.mihra.com](http://www.mihra.com). They both have Facebook pages as well. Come join the fun, or if nothing else, take a break and come watch a performance. The schedules are on line and if you have any questions you're free to contact me on Facebook (which I don't follow very close) so it's best to contact me by phone or text at (231)670-2213. Thank you, and come to a rodeo!

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