

WildThing canceled

Written by By Cody Begaye Sun Correspondent
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Donations for children's home being accepted

Numerous public events in Gallup and across New Mexico have either been delayed or canceled in the past three months as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic. The latest addition to that list is one of Gallup's signature summer events, WildThing Championship Bullriding.

The announcement was made June 10 on the event's Facebook page.

"Our heart hurts over this situation, and that we will not be able to bring this show to all of our amazing fans," the post reads. "So many of you Wildthing families have been there and supported us for so many years and helped us to become the number one open bull riding in the entire Southwest."

WildThing organizer Larry Peterson called the decision a tremendous blow to the local economy and to everybody involved with working at the event and attending it.

"We hung in there as long as we could, hoping things could change," Peterson said June 17.

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“But there are strict rules about how many people can be in a place, with health issues and concerns now, which is why it was canceled.”

Moving the event’s date was not an option because of the number of people and planning the event requires, Peterson said. On top of that, the City of Gallup had already canceled numerous summer events at Red Rock Park.

For 27 years, WildThing has been going on and becoming the biggest open bullriding event in the Southwest, Peterson said. It is an event that brought people together for all manner of entertainment and surprises each year.

But the loss is more than just entertainment. Manuelito Children’s Home sets up to sell concessions and parking at WildThing, which has become the home’s largest fundraiser every year.

“We definitely are the biggest fundraiser for the children’s home,” Peterson said. “It’s a trickle down [impact], so a lot of people are going to be hurting from the cancellation. It’s a tremendous blow to our rodeo industry.”

While the event may not be happening, people can go to the children’s home website and donate directly there, Peterson said.

“The home does the Fun Run on Memorial Day, which is the second biggest fundraiser of the year, and they had to cancel that,” he said. “So they lost out on both of their largest fundraisers. We’ve pushed to help that home out for 27 years.”

Peterson said he’s hoping some of the sponsors like Walmart can still donate to the children’s home.

“They do very well at WildThing because they have no expenses. We absorb the rent of the

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park and the parking, and all the people donate their time to the event,” Peterson said. “They can’t help but do very well at it because we’ve brought big crowds in.”

Peterson said WildThing always aimed to bring top-quality shows and entertainment throughout its history. He recalled receiving messages from families who are disappointed the event was canceled and shared their history with the event, from how they went with their parents to now taking their children.

Peterson said he is hoping the event bounces back in the future.

“We plan on trying to come back next year, though I don’t know how hurt our sponsors are going to be or what shape things will be in,” Peterson said. “The city says they’re hurting, but we’re going to try and come back. That’s our plan right now.

“It’s all we can do, just to bring back the top caliber show we’ve always brought them and hope everyone turns out next year,” Peterson said.

WildThing Championship Bullriding asks people to take time to visit the Manuelito Children’s Home website and donate what they can to help the home at www.mnch.org.

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