

Stage set for return

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Rider entries fill up in first hour

The calendar page has turned to July, and with businesses reopening and outdoor events able to resume, it is almost time for the return of a signature Gallup event: WildThing Championship Bullriding.

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WildThing organizer Larry Peterson said rider entries were taken last week and spots were completely filled within an hour.

“We’ve got a lot of really good bull riders coming to Gallup,” Peterson told the *Sun* June 29. “We have riders from everywhere, [such as] all the top riders from the Navajo Nation. We have riders from many states, [including] Texas, Oklahoma, California, Wyoming, and Oregon.”

About four previous WildThing champions will return to the venue this year, Peterson added. He also noted a couple of top Brazilian bull riders will be competing July 9.

With the recent announcement that New Mexico was going to fully reopen July 1, Peterson said the excitement began to grow for a fully open event.

“Everywhere we’ve gone, everyone just seems so excited about WildThing,” he said. “The radio stations[are] getting attention for it. The ticket outlets [are] already being hit even though it’s early. The sponsors are excited. All the fans we’ve seen everywhere are ready.

“Everyone around here feels a need to get back to normalcy. They want entertainment,” Peterson continued. “WildThing is going to be the first big event after this ordeal for the Four Corners area. Everyone is fired up for it.”

As previously reported by the *Sun*, one group that is eager for WildThing’s return is Manuelito Children’s Home. They provide the parking and concessions for WildThing, which is the home’s largest fundraiser of the year.

“The people that come and pay for parking, they’re helping out the home,” Peterson said. “I know the home is excited to get back out there.”

The event schedule aims to bring the electric atmosphere fans are familiar with, but as is tradition with WildThing, Peterson tells guests to expect the unexpected.

“We’ve got the best bucking bulls in the world coming to Gallup. We’ve got great entertainment lined up, including the woolly riders, and Cowboy Poker,” Peterson said. “We have our entertainers coming. This year’s funnyman is one of the top in the country. He did the National Finals Rodeo last year.

“But there is always something new for them I want to surprise them with,” Peterson continued.

Peterson said everyone involved with WildThing is glad to be back after a challenging year, and he knows the fans have waited an especially long time for this event.

“We want all the WildThings to come back and have a great time,” he said. “We’re excited for everyone to come back and have a blast, enjoying the great bull riding and the great things we do and the fireworks. We’re just as big and wild as we’ve ever been, and we’re really going to bring it to everyone.”

For more information on WildThing, including ticket sales and where to buy, visit their Facebook page at <https://www.facebook.com/wildthing.bullriding/>.

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