

VIRDEN  
**INDOOR RODEO**  
& WILD WEST DAZE

THURSDAY, AUGUST 13<sup>TH</sup> • SUNDAY, AUGUST 16<sup>TH</sup>, 2026



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# PRESIDENT STATEMENT

Howdy folks,

Welcome to the **36th Virden Indoor Rodeo and Wild West Daze!**

Every year I wonder how this weekend can get any better, and every year our volunteers, sponsors, competitors, and fans prove that it can. What started as a small rodeo back in 1989 has grown into one of the premier events in our community, and I'm incredibly proud to be part of it.

**Rodeo is more than a sport—it's a way of life. Once it gets into your blood, it has a way of staying there.** Here in Virden and the surrounding area, we're fortunate to have so many families who have either carried this western tradition through generations or discovered a passion for it themselves. That passion continues to grow, and it's exciting to see so many young cowboys and cowgirls carrying it forward.

This year's grand entry celebrates the **Future of Rodeo**. You'll see local kids from Virden and the surrounding area, from toddlers to teenagers, entering the arena. These young cowboys and cowgirls represent the next generation of our western way of life. We are fortunate to live in a community where rodeo traditions continue to grow, and it's exciting to see so many families embracing the sport. I'd like to think that somewhere over the past 36 years, our rodeo has inspired a few kids—and maybe even a few parents—to saddle a horse, enter their first jackpot, or compete in their first rodeo.

This year, we also celebrate two people who have spent their lives around horses. **Doug and Deb King have been inducted into the Horsemen's Hall of Fame**, and it's hard to think of two more deserving people. Doug and Deb's story with horses began in the Standardbred industry, where they raced and trained horses. They both went on to team rope, and rodeo became a big part of their family's life. They were heavily involved in high school rodeo while raising their three boys, helping support and encourage the next generation of young competitors and giving their boys the opportunity to grow up in the sport.

Over the years, Doug and Deb also developed a world-class Warmblood breeding program that has now been taken over by their son, Scott. Their journey with horses has taken them through many different corners of the horse industry, but their passion for horses and rodeo has remained constant.

The King family has been close friends of my family for many years, and I've been fortunate to have a front-row seat to some of their journey. I was lucky enough to ride some of their horses over the years, and one of my personal highlights was getting to team rope at the National High School Finals Rodeo in Farmington, New Mexico, off their great horse, **Muscle Man**.

I have a lot of great memories with the King family, and their story is a perfect example of what happens when a passion for horses and the western way of life becomes a lifelong journey.

One of the greatest strengths of our rodeo has always been its volunteers. Every year, countless hours are spent behind the scenes making this weekend possible. This year's recipient of the **Gerry Holmes Memorial Volunteer of the Year Award is Kevin McKinnon**.

Kevin has dedicated many years to our board and has always been willing to step up whenever help was needed. Running light towers around, helping with setups and tear-downs, sitting through countless meetings, watering the grounds, and even cleaning up glass from broken tractor doors—Kevin is always somewhere in the middle of it all.

He's also a team roper himself, and I've had the privilege of knowing Kevin not just



**THOMAS HAGAN AND FAMILY!**

as a fellow rodeo board member, but as one of my best friends. I'm especially happy to see him receive this award this year. Kevin has put in a lot of years helping make this rodeo what it is, and I know how much this event means to him. It's pretty special to see a good friend recognized for something he's given so much of his time and energy to.

As I said last year, I believe rodeo is part of Virden's DNA. Watching young competitors follow in the footsteps of those who built this event reminds me that the future of rodeo is in good hands. The stories of people like Doug and Deb King, the dedication of volunteers like Kevin, and the enthusiasm of the young cowboys and cowgirls in this year's grand entry all remind us that this tradition is something worth protecting and passing on.

As long as we continue to support our youth, encourage new families, and celebrate our western heritage, I believe the future of rodeo in our community will continue to be bright.

On behalf of the Virden Indoor Rodeo & Wild West Daze Board, thank you to our volunteers, sponsors, competitors, and everyone who comes out to support this incredible weekend. Best of luck to all the contestants, and I hope everyone enjoys the **36th Virden Indoor Rodeo and Wild West Daze!**

Thank you,  
**Thomas Hagan**  
Virden Indoor Rodeo & Wild West Daze



*Welcome Rodeo  
Contestants & Fans!*

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# MP & MLA STATEMENTS

## STATEMENT FROM MP GRANT JACKSON ON THE VIRDEN INDOOR RODEO & WILD WEST DAZE

As the Member of Parliament for Brandon–Souris, I want to extend my heartfelt congratulations to the organizers, volunteers, competitors, and community members who make the Virden Indoor Rodeo & Wild West Daze such an incredible success year after year. I also want to warmly welcome all the visitors who have travelled to take part in this special event.

The Virden Indoor Rodeo is a true point of pride for our region, bringing people together to celebrate western heritage and the best of rural Manitoba. Being named the Canadian Cowboys Association Rodeo of the Year for the past three years is no small feat, and it speaks volumes about the spirit and dedication of the people of Virden.

Showcasing both the skill of its competitors and the character of our region, the rodeo is a reflection of the values and traditions that define Brandon–Souris – hard work and perseverance, a deep connection to our rural way of life, and a strong commitment to community involvement.

Wishing everyone a safe and exciting rodeo weekend!



## STATEMENT FROM MLA GREG NESBITT ON THE VIRDEN INDOOR RODEO & WILD WEST DAZE

"I congratulate the organizers & all the volunteers of the Virden Indoor Rodeo, for producing another year of great entertainment for the area's residents and visitors! I commend and thank every one for their efforts in making this event so successful.

I also wish each competitor much success during this rodeo & good sportsmanship. Have a great weekend in Virden!"



Town of Virden  
Mayor, Council and  
Staff would like to  
welcome all  
competitors and  
spectators to the

2026  
Virden Indoor  
Rodeo & Wild  
West Daze

VIRDEN



Welcome to the Rodeo!

On behalf of the Town of Virden Council, staff, and residents, it is my pleasure to welcome competitors, volunteers, sponsors, and spectators to another exciting Virden Indoor Rodeo & Wild West Daze!

Following the incredible success of last year's 35th Anniversary celebration, we are proud to congratulate the Rodeo on once again being named Rodeo of the Year, as well as winning "Event of the Year" at this year's Tourism Westman awards ceremony. These honours year after year reflect the dedication of the Rodeo Steering Committee, volunteers, sponsors, and everyone who helps make this event a success.

The Virden Indoor Rodeo & Wild West Daze continues to celebrate our Western heritage while showcasing the welcoming spirit of our community. Whether you're here to compete, cheer on your favourite competitors, or enjoy the festivities, we hope you have a safe, memorable, and enjoyable time in Virden.

Thank you for joining us in celebrating one of western Canada's premier rodeo events—we're so glad you're here!

Mayor Tina Williams



HORSEMAN'S H

Doug and Deb to receive Horseman's Hall of Fame honour



The King's venture into the world of performance horses under English tack

SUBMITTED PHOTO

By Anne Davison  
EMPIRE-ADVANCE

Doug and Deb King are recipients of the 2026 Virden Indoor Rodeo Horseman's Hall of Fame award to be presented during rodeo's opening ceremonies along with their ride in the celebrity carriage.

The King's venture into the world of performance horses under English tack is an extraordinary story. Their success, even more extraordinary.

Over the years, Virden has become known for excellence in almost all aspects of the horse world and the rodeo committee has established the Hall of Fame to honour people who have made an exemplary contribution as breeders, promoters, organizers, by achievements in competition, or in countless other ways.

Retired Virden veterinarian and longtime rodeo com-

mittee member Dr. Everett More said of the Kings, "They're ground breaking in the equine ranching industry for developing a breeding program specifically aimed at hunter-jumper horses."

From humble beginnings in the heart of cowboy country, the Kings launched into a sport horse breeding program.

"Everyone else was raising quarter horses for rodeo and Western pleasure while Doug and Deb were pretty much the only ones who developed a sport horse breeding program from scratch," said More. "The mares they started with did not have sport horse blood in them at all and they kept on breeding, using good stallions and artificial insemination, to the point where their horses are going all across Canada and into the States."

"That, to me, sets them apart," stated More.

Along the way, Doug and Deb have been strong contributors to high school rodeo and to Virden Indoor Rodeo & Wild West Daze. Their genuine love of everything equine has been caught by their three sons who, along with their family, support rodeo and are forging their own reputations in the horse world.

**Backstory**

Horses drew Doug and Deb together.

The daughter of Ray and Kay Dryden, Deb and her brothers Steve, Dave and Clay grew up around horses.

"I was brought up on the farm northwest of Virden. We had a track there." She recalls her dad's "lovely stable of standardbreds" where she learned to groom, train and drive the harness racers also learning about equine health and soundness. "So that's where it started really young for me."

Deb and brother David raced a stable of horses together in Cloverdale, B.C. for several years before Deb decided she should grow up and get a girl job. But it wasn't quite as fulfilling as she had hoped so, off she went to the races again.

Meanwhile, Doug lived in Saskatoon, Sask. and at 16, went to work at the Saskatoon Livestock yard. The owners had a successful stable of Standardbred race horses so when Doug graduated high school, he became involved working and training race horses for them until he was able to acquire his own racing stable in 1979.

He met Deb at a race meet in Saskatoon in 1980 where she asked him to drive for her.

"I hired Doug, because I kind of wanted to date him anyway," she admits. Doug won Rookie Driver of the Year for the Saskatoon race meet and Deb knew she'd chosen the right driver.

Kick off your boots and hang your hat!





IT'S Rodeo TIME Y'all!



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HALL OF FAME



They raced together in Alberta until, in 1981, they decided to marry and move to Manitoba to start a family.

They continued harness racing in Manitoba until oldest son, Joe, was born in 1982 with second son Scott born in 1983.

In 1984 they established Ravine Ranch Sport Horse farm north of the original Dryden farmstead just before third son Charlie was born in 1985.

Pfizer began an Equine Ranchers program and in 1984 the Kings got a contract and began breeding crossbred mares with good thoroughbred stallions. “We had, over the years, probably seven of the nicest thoroughbred stallions you would ever find,” says Deb adding, “They were magnificent stallions.”

Appreciation extended to their horses’ personalities. “Our boys were handling those stallions when they were six and seven and eight years old. They were wonderful temperament.”

Friend Factor

Ravine Ranch was producing good sport horses and through the sale of their progeny Deb developed a friendship with prestigious coach and judge, Connie Dorsch, many times a commentator for Brandon winter exhibition grand prix.

“She still coaches all over North America, and she kind of shared her passion with me and started to teach me about the warm bloods. And, you know, Doug was good with it. They’re so elegant, and they’re big, and they’re gentle. We fell in love with the warm bloods.”

A great opportunity came along, but with a hurdle that pushed the Kings into a learning curve.

It was their first warm blood stallion, a horse that Ian Miller (Captain Canada in the Olympics) had competed on. A woman from Chicago, Illinois owned the horse, a German import.

But the stallion had acquired a spinal injury preventing him from further competition or pasture breeding. The owner had approached Dr. Andrew Clark, a veterinarian from Guelph, Ont. asking for his help, as the horse required special care

and special owners for that care.

Dr. Clark had seen the King’s operation and recommended the horse be sent to Ravine Ranch. That’s when Doug and Deb started into artificial insemination of their mares, which meant taking courses and setting up their own lab to process the semen. This was a very intense but highly rewarding time, made possible by their sons’ help.

“You know, it also let our boys develop this tremendous love for horses. Because they worked with us all the way along,” said Deb.

Keeping Rodeo Close

Since establishing their family at the Lenore farm, and with the Browns as neighbours, showing them the ropes, it was only natural that rodeo would be part of the King family life. Team roping became a passion for the couple and also for their three sons. From the start they supported Virden’s rodeo and also spent many weekends as a family travelling and competing.

When the boys were old enough to join high school rodeo, they expanded their events from team roping to include calf roping and steer wrestling.

Deb teamed up with Jocelyn Hagen and Judy Brown to run Virden’s first Manitoba High School Rodeo Association event and continued until all their kids graduated from high school.

Next, it was time to refocus on Virden Indoor Rodeo. For some 20 years Doug has been lending a hand during set up and take down and Deb has been cooking up a storm for the big Friday VIP meal that the rodeo committee and sponsors enjoy prior to rodeo action.

Continuing in the Equine Ranching program, Scott and wife Britta purchased Ravine Ranch in 2017 and built their own home there. Doug and Deb continue to live in their “little farm house” at the Ranch, helping out when needed.

Deb sums it up: “I truly am living the dream – I spend my days with our horses and our family and I get to watch our



Induction into the Horseman’s Hall of Fame Deb and Doug King.

grandchildren become our next generation of horsemen and horsewomen.”

Induction into the Horseman’s Hall of Fame means a lot for the Kings. “We’re very honoured to receive this. We’ve been passionate about Virden Indoor Rodeo & Wild West Days, forever. We’re very proud of our town and our town’s commitment for a rodeo and our volunteers’ commitment for a rodeo.”

WELCOME RIDERS AND FANS!





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RODEO PARTICIPANTS

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FANS & PARTICIPANTS



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# AWARDS



## Virден Indoor Rodeo & Wild West Daze recognized for bringing entertainment and bucks to the community

By Nancy Jo Moller  
EMPIRE-ADVANCE

Westman Tourism Event of the Year with Budget over \$10,000 Award recognizes a hallmark festival or event that creates a substantial economic impact within the local community, attracts visitors from outside the region/province/country, generates regional/national media attention and positively promotes Southwest Manitoba.

While 5 of 6 nominees are located in our readership area, the winner was Virден Indoor Rodeo & Wild West Daze who celebrated their 35-year anniversary in 2025. Estab-

lished as one of Manitoba's premier rodeo events, drawing competitors and spectators from across Canada and internationally while delivering significant tourism, cultural and economic impact to the region. Recognized multiple times as 'Rodeo of the Year' by both the Manitoba Rodeo Cowboys Association and also by the Canadian Cowboys Association the event combines elite competition and family friendly programming, community celebrations and strong volunteer involvement. Through continuous innovation, infrastructure investments, strategic marketing and deep commun-

ity partnerships the rodeo has grown into a defining tradition for Virден that celebrates western heritage while generating substantial regional visitation and economic activity each year. Steve Dryden accepted the award on behalf of the organization and spoke on how "tourism is more than travel but a sharing of our heritage".

Travellers and residents flock into town for the rodeo both as competitors and spectators. Four days in August are filled with a variety of events exhibiting what the Virден area has to offer. Breakfasts, family events, business showcases, parade and world class rodeo welcome young and

old to join in the fun. It is an opportunity to reconnect with not only western heritage and old friends while enjoying modern conveniences but also making new friends and seeing what all the excitement is about.

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TAILGATE PARTY

★★★★★

# A community Tailgate Party that keeps growing and keeps its heart



PHOTO BY KEN WADDELL

An inflatable mechanical bull ride is a huge hit at the Tailgate Party. Photo from the 2025 Tailgate Party.

By Beth McConnell  
EMPIRE-ADVANCE

Every summer, something special happens that reminds people why small town gatherings matter.

The annual tailgate party — once just a simple idea to bring families together for an easygoing afternoon — has grown into a full blown community tradition. And the best

part is that it hasn't lost the charm it started with. From day one, the goal was clear: create a family friendly, laid back event that everyone could enjoy without worrying about

cost. That spirit is still at the center of everything. There's no cover charge — just an open invitation to come out, relax, and have fun.

This year's lineup brings the energy in all the right ways. Two crowd pleasing bands, Old Bones Buffalo and Prairie Roots, will be playing throughout the day, covering old favorites, new hits, and all the "goodies" that get people smiling and singing along. Their music sets the tone for the whole event: upbeat, welcoming, and full of life.

Families will find plenty to keep the kids busy — and happy. The kid's carnival is packed with bouncy castles, games, and even a mechanical bull, all completely free for children to enjoy. It's the kind of setup where kids

run wild with excitement while parents get a chance to breathe, visit, and take in the day.

And of course, no tailgate is complete without good food. Guests can dig into bison burgers, beans, and dessert at prices that feel almost nostalgic in today's world. Add in refreshments for both adults and kids, and you've got everything you need for a wholesome afternoon outdoors.

Community support is a huge part of what keeps this event thriving. This year's platinum sponsor, Four Seasons RV, deserves a special spotlight for helping make the day possible. Their commitment to local events and family fun shines through in a big way. Additional thanks go to DC Septic

and Ravine Ranch Sport Horses, whose sponsorship helps keep the event accessible and enjoyable for everyone.

What started as a simple idea has become a gathering that people look forward to all year. And as it continues to grow, the heart of it stays the same: great food, great music, and a place where families and friends from near and far can come together without breaking the bank.

Communities from across the region are invited to join in, soak up the atmosphere, and enjoy a day built on generosity, fun, and connection. This tailgate party isn't just an event — it's a reminder of how good it feels when everyone comes together.



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WELCOME TO THE

VIRDEN

INDOOR RODEO

& WILD WEST DAZE

AUGUST 13<sup>TH</sup> - 16<sup>TH</sup>

www.virdenindoorrodeo.ca

THURSDAY, AUGUST 13<sup>TH</sup>

★ VALLEYVIEW CO-OP PANCAKE BREAKFAST ★  
7:00 - 9:00 am @ Tundra Oil & Gas Place

★ HIGH SCHOOL RODEO ★  
9:00 am @ Tundra Oil & Gas Place

★ COREX RODEO KICKOFF BBQ ★  
11:00 am - 2:00 pm @ Victoria Park

★ DOWNTOWN EVENTS AND SHOW & SHINE ★  
5:00 - 10:00 pm Various family activities, petting zoo, bouncy castles,  
face painting, etc, as well as food trucks and local vendors.

★ KIDS TALENT SHOW ★

FRIDAY, AUGUST 14<sup>TH</sup>

★ HIGH SCHOOL RODEO ★  
8:30 am @ Tundra Oil & Gas Place

RODEO 7:30 PM

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The first 1000 fans will receive a Door Crasher  
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★ COORS LIGHT BARN BAR ★  
10:00 pm - 1:00 am *Please drink responsibly*

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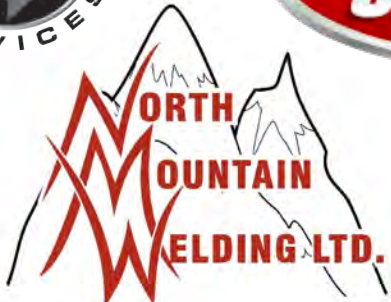
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# SATURDAY, AUGUST 15<sup>TH</sup>

★ LIONS CLUB PANCAKE BREAKFAST ★  
8:00 am - 10:00 am @ Legion Hall

★ PARADE ★  
10:00 am - Departs from Virden Collegiate

★ RODEO SLACK ★  
12:00 pm @ Tundra Oil & Gas Place

★ FOUR SEASONS TAILGATE PARTY ★  
12:00 pm - 6:00 pm @ Virden Curling Rink  
BBQ, Beer Garden, Carnival Games & Live Music

★ 3D BARREL RACING ★  
2:00 pm @ Outdoor Arena

★ DAZE DANCE ★  
9:00 pm - 2:00 am @ Virden Curling Rink  
Featuring Byron Falk & The Halftime Cowboys  
Tickets available at: Sooper Dave's and HiWay Grocery. Must be 18 years or older to attend. Photo ID is required. Please drink responsibly.

## RODEO 6:30 PM

Tundra Oil & Gas Place

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# SUNDAY, AUGUST 16<sup>TH</sup>

★ 3D BARREL RACING ★  
11:00 am @ Outdoor Arena

★ TIE DOWN/BREAKAWAY  
JACKPOT ★  
Starts at 10:00 am  
@ Tundra Oil & Gas Place

★ DEMOLITION DERBY ★  
1:00 pm - 5:00 pm @ Demolition Track  
on PR #257, west of the cement plant

## RODEO 5:30 PM

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# Built from the Ground Up, Virden's Rodeo Legacy

By Lauren Halowaty  
EMPIRE-ADVANCE

When the dust swirls and the arena lights shine down as the cowboys wait for the chutes to open, it's easy to look around and think these local traditions just happen on their own. But the truth is, the events that bring Virden together were built from the ground up by locals with a true passion for their community. In Virden, two of the primary figures behind the town's deep-rooted horse culture were Orville Fowler and his cousin, Bud Kenderdine.

Orville's life was deeply woven into the fabric of Manitoba agriculture. He spent his early years moving from Elm Creek to Maryfield, Saskatchewan, where his family ran the general store. From there, the family ventured to Souris, and then to Hargrave to operate another general store. However, once the Fowlers made Virden their home in 1945, they never

looked back. Most people who knew Orville knew him through business, whether it was Fowler & Sons Ltd. (trucking), Fowler Chev Olds Ltd., or his time on the Canadian Dealer Council. Yet, no matter how busy things got at the garage, his heart always belonged to the land and the livestock.

For ten years, Orville stepped away from the automotive business to focus on farming and raising Aberdeen Angus cattle, but his true passion were his horses. For over two decades, he was a familiar, welcomed face at local agricultural fairs, where he proudly showed his Hackney horses. He poured everything he had into supporting local sports and agriculture, serving on the Virden Ag Society, the Brandon Winter Fair Board, and as president of the Manitoba Light Horse Association.

Bud Kenderdine's impact on



Orville stands proudly next to 'Miss Judy', the first Hackney Horse he ever purchased.

Virden extended far beyond that first rodeo. A prominent leader for local farmers, he eventually stepped up as the President of the Virden Agricultural Society. His leadership proved invaluable when Virden faced a severe crisis in 1961, as a harsh drought swept the region and left local farmers

facing massive hardships. At the Virden Fair that summer, Bud stood on the grandstand stage alongside Manitoba's Minister of Agriculture, George Hutton. The minister had to announce emergency measures, including shipping in hay and pumping water to dried-out farms. Hutton spent a significant portion of his speech praising

Bud, the Ag Society, and the town. He commended them for rallying together to put on a fantastic fair despite the adversity, showcasing the resilient spirit of Virden to this day.

By the late 1950s, Orville and Bud shared a vision. They wanted to bring a top-tier indoor rodeo to Virden, as the arena was brand new, built only the year prior. They wanted this event to bring neighbors and community members together and showcase the very best in local horsemanship. In October of 1959, that dream came true at the Virden Arena. Pulling off an indoor event of that scale required immense coordination and trust, so partnering with his cousin made perfect sense. Bud was already deeply embedded in the rodeo world and knew exactly who to call, from the rodeo contestants to the stock contractors.

The stakes for the historic event were incredibly high, serving as the absolute last show of the 1959 rodeo season in Canada. Because contestants were

desperate for a final crack at the all-important winners' purses and crucial year-end points, the indoor arena drew a spectacular lineup of Canada's top riders to show local audiences exactly what a professional cowboy has to do to make a living. The response from the community was massive; crowds turned out exceedingly well both nights, with just under 2,000 adults and children paying admission to witness the historic spectacle. Each performance opened with a grand entry of the cowboys and the formal introduction of rodeo and Virden Agricultural Society officials.

Among the elite entries in the big-money brackets were reigning 1959 calf roping champion Bud Van Cleave and bareback champion Dick Havens. The competition proved to be fiercely unpredictable. In the Calf Roping event, Van Cleave missed his calf completely, opening the door for Wilf Gerlitz of Youngstown, Alberta, to capture the top

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# RODEO 1959



spot. Alf Thiessen of Herbert, Saskatchewan, took second place with a swift time of 15.0 seconds flat, followed closely by Lorne Wells of Medicine Hat. Gerlitz proved to be the dominant force of the weekend, also riding away with the victory in the Bull Riding event, ahead of runner-up Bob Duce of Calgary, Lynn Taylor, and Jim Baisch of Glendive, Montana. In the Bareback Bronc Riding, reigning champ Dick Havens held his ground to take the win, followed by a second and third-place tie between defending champion Leo Brown and Alvin Owens of Brooks, Alberta, while Jim Groves took fourth. The competitive fire was so high that the cowboys even orchestrated extra, self-funded roping side-bets among themselves between the scheduled events.

The battle for the rodeo's ultimate prize, a coveted \$500.00 trophy saddle, came down to an intense Hi-Point competition. Future Hall of Fame legend Leo Brown of Czar, Alberta, ultimately beat Bud Butterfield for the title by racking up crucial points across the major events.

The fierce depth of the competition was fully on display in the Saddle Bronc Riding event, where Brown captured the top spot, followed closely by Lynn Taylor of Miles City, Montana, the multi-talented Dale Greenwood, and Angus Fox.

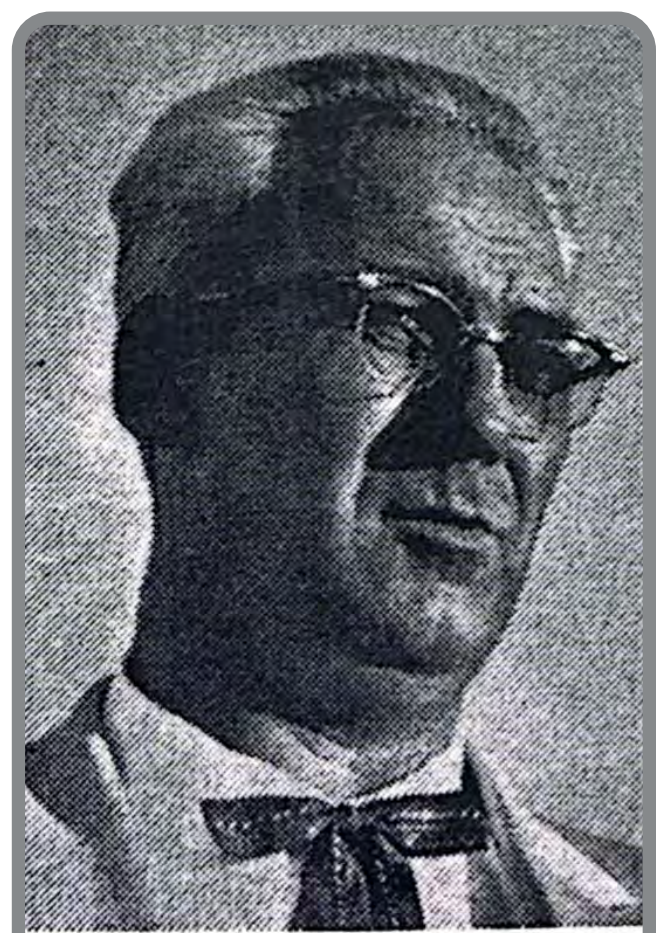
Beyond the fierce athletic competition, the indoor arena featured unique variety acts and musical entertainment that kept the energy electric. Dale Greenwood of Cartwright, North Dakota, was undoubtedly one of the hardest-working people at the rodeo. Operating as a top rider turned clown, Greenwood teamed up with his young son, Dick, to perform acts reminiscent of popular Old West television shows. His continuous comedic dialogue with announcer Herb Christie injected clean fun into the dangerous business in the dirt. Greenwood also assisted the pick-up riders and brought the house down with special stunts: Friday night featured Hells Angels, a Brahma bull hitched to a chariot with Greenwood at the reins, while Saturday's finale ended with him baiting a bull

before scrambling high up the arena fence to safety.

The roots of Canadian professional rodeo's governing body stretch back to 1944, when it was originally founded as the Cowboys Insurance Association, a humble group where riders pooled one dollar each for mutual protection. By 1945, the association officially incorporated under the Cowboys Protective Association (CPA) banner, formalizing and protecting the wild sport under the early leadership of its first president, Ken Thomson. It was under this CPA banner, and with the expert guidance of rodeo manager and arena director Jerry Meyers of Moose Jaw, that Virden held its historic 1959 indoor rodeo, a legendary event made possible by Bud's deep ties to the organization. The association continued to mature, incorporating in 1965 as the Canadian Rodeo Cowboys Association (CRCA) where Leo Brown himself would go on to serve on the board of directors for 11 years, before ultimately evolving in 1980 into the modern Canadian Professional

Rodeo Association (CPRA) as we know today. Bringing in such high-profile competitors and reigning national champions was made possible because two cousins simply came together with an idea. With the help of personal connections and a shared passion with a lot of determination, they proved that Virden was the perfect stage for an indoor rodeo.

It turned out to be a monumental milestone, permanently putting Virden on the map as a premier horse, cattle, and agricultural community. Orville's dedication to the town was forever etched into history when he was inducted into the Virden Indoor Rodeo Horseman Hall of Fame. From now on in Virden, when those lights dim as 'Oh Canada' is sung and the broncs wait just before the chutes open, the echo of October 1959 is still right there surrounding the arena. It stands as a powerful reminder of what can happen when a couple of dedicated cousins look at their hometown and decide to build something that lasts for a lifetime.



**President T. S. Kenderdine**  
**Virden Agricultural Society**

FILE PHOTOS

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DAZE DANCE



# Dust Off Your Boots, the 2026 Virden Rodeo Daze Dance is Back!

By Lauren Halowaty  
EMPIRE-ADVANCE

Pull on your best boots and polish up your favourite belt buckle, because the wildest, most anticipated dance of the summer is galloping back into town. The Virden Rodeo Daze Dance is officially returning this August, and the 2026 edition promises to turn the volume all the way up. When the dust finally settles in the arena on Saturday, August 15, trot straight on down to the Virden Curling Rink where the real party begins.

Back by popular demand is Manitoba's own country group, Byron Falk and the Half-Time Cowboys. Known for their high-energy, crowd-pleasing

country hits and unstoppable stage presence, they'll have the dance floor packed within 8 seconds. Whether you're a seasoned line-dancer or you just love to sway with a cold drink in hand, their rhythm will keep you moving all night long, or at least until the cows come home!

Organizers aren't horsing around this year; the doors open and the music kicks off at 9PM. Starting an hour earlier than previous years gives attendees a full five hours of non-stop, small-town fun, roping the crowd in for a wild ride all the way until 2:00 AM. To ensure a comfortable and fun night for everyone, food options will be available on-site, portable washrooms will be

accessible, and good times will be abundant.

Admission tickets are just \$20 per person. However, they have a track record of selling out faster than a runaway stallion, so attendees are highly encouraged to grab their early from local hot spots before they sell out! A quick reminder from the event committee: make sure to have your valid government ID handy at the gate, even if you look like you've already seen plenty of prairie sunrises. Friendly carding will be strictly enforced to ensure a safe, fun, and smooth-running environment for all cowboys and cowgirls. There is absolutely no need to stirrup any hesitation, giddy up!



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Giddy up, buttercup! This parade is going to be legend-dairy



FILE PHOTO

The 2026 Virden Indoor Rodeo and Wild West Days Parade will be on Saturday, August 15. Line for those participating will start after 9am at the Virden Collegiate Institute at 7th Ave South and PR 257. Parade Marshall Herb Warkentin is excited to be in charge again this year. The parade will start at 10am. If you have any questions, please reach out to Herb at 204-748-1717 or 204-748-5250. Be sure to get out your lawn chairs and bring your bags for candy to watch this year Rodeo Parade! All participants are much appreciated. Photo from the Rodeo Parade 2025.



Parade Route 2026

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# Julianna Moore, small town stages, big hearted dreams

By Beth McConnell  
EMPIRE-ADVANCE

Julianna Moore, a singer whose warmth, honesty, and classic leaning style resonate deeply with hometown audiences, will be feature at the Virden Downtown Daze again this year. Her journey, though rooted in small town Manitoba, has carried her to national stages and personal milestones she once only imagined.

### Starting Close to Home

Julianna didn't actually begin performing in Virden until 2021, when she sang at The Aud with Konektis. From there, Music in the Park and other community events quickly became her favourite places to share her voice. Encouragement came early: her parents entered her into talent competitions when she was just seven, helping her build confidence long before she stepped onto bigger stages.

### Why Hometown Crowds Matter

Small town audiences hold a special place in her heart. "They appreciate the kind of music I do," she says. "They know all the older, classic songs I love to throw in." But that familiarity also brings nerves — performing for people who know you is its own kind of pressure. Still, Music in the Park remains her favourite venue for its energy and sense of community.

### Creating From Emotion

For Julianna, inspiration always starts with feeling. "Music begins with the heart," she says. "My ideas come from how I'm feeling or what I want others to feel." Even when she isn't writing new material, her artistic choices are guided by emotion and personal experience.

Growing a Career from a Small Town

One of the biggest challenges has been visibility. "It's hard to truly get your name out there," she says. As a young artist, she didn't see many small town girls chasing big dreams — until she got older and realized it was possible.

A major milestone came when people began contacting her to book shows. "That's when I thought, 'Okay, this is really happening.'"

### Life Offstage

Her days are full: she teaches music and works as a school librarian, then spends evenings in rehearsals with choirs, bands, and duos. Weekends often mean performances. "My family jokes that I'm never home — I rent just to sleep there," she laughs.

One place that always feels like hers is Lady of the Lake in Brandon. "It was one of the first places I played almost ten years ago. Each time I perform there, it feels like home."

### Rodeo Weekends & Outdoor Shows

Outdoor events bring a different kind of excitement — and unpredictability. "Weather is the biggest challenge," she says, recalling a rodeo performance where she ended up soaked by the second chorus. Still, she loves the energy of fair crowds and always arrives early to read the audience and adjust her setlist.

### Community & Connection

Being part of local events means a lot to her. "It's wonderful to see a community gather together to support one another," she says. She hopes her performances add brightness and familiarity to the experience — "fun in the sun," as she puts it.

### Canada's Got Talent: A Surreal Moment

Her Canada's Got Talent audition was emotional, especially with a song chosen in memory of her dad.



SUBMITTED PHOTO

Julianna Moore, a rising small town artist known for her heartfelt performances.

"Producers have the final say on the song," she explains. "I really wanted to sing Faithfully by Journey because of the memories with my dad."

Despite feeling nervous, the four yeses were deeply meaningful. "It was surreal. I didn't think it was my best performance, but I was so grateful for the opportunity."

### Dreams Still Ahead

Julianna dreams of moving to Nashville someday — and of performing at the Grand Ole Opry. "The music business is such a hard one to get into, so it all feels a little wild," she says. But for now, she remains a small town kid at heart, building her career from the place that shaped her.

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BREAKFAST



# A warm kickoff to Rodeo Weekend

By Beth McConnell  
EMPIRE-ADVANCE

As the Virden Indoor Rodeo and Wild West Daze weekend approaches, one tradition continues to set the tone for community spirit, generosity, and hometown pride: the Valleyview Co op Pancake Breakfast. Now in its fourth year, the event has become a meaningful way to start the festivities while supporting the next generation of rodeo athletes.

This year's breakfast will be held on Thursday, August 13, from 7:00 to 9:00 a.m. in the Sunrise Room at Tundra Oil & Gas Place. For a suggested donation of \$5.00, guests can enjoy a hot, hearty meal featuring pancakes, sausage, fruit, coffee, and juice. All proceeds support Manitoba High School Rodeo competitors from the Virden area.

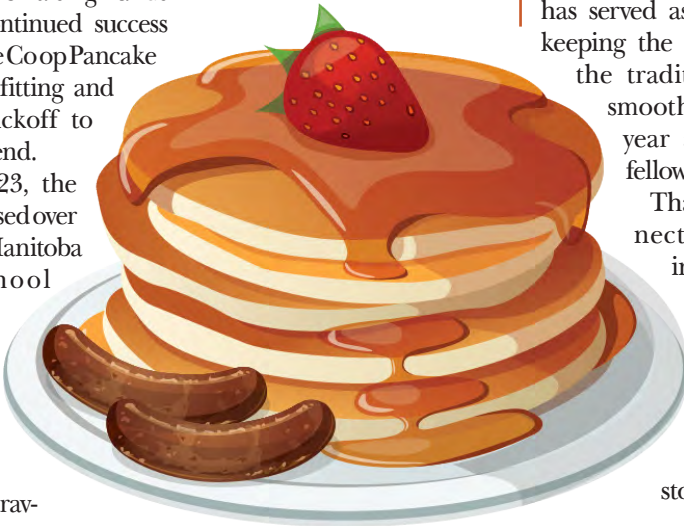
The breakfast is fully hosted and funded by Valleyview Co op, whose team members staff the event each year. Their efforts are complemented by a handful of Manitoba High School Rodeo participants who lend a hand during the first half of the morning. While the exact volunteers

change from year to year, their presence adds a special connection between the fundraiser and the youth it benefits.

What makes this breakfast stand out is its purpose. It's more than a meal—it's a chance for the community to gather in support of young athletes who are building skills, confidence, and passion within the sport. For many attendees, the morning offers a relaxed opportunity to visit with neighbours, connect with local families, and show appreciation for the hard work that goes into rodeo at the high school level. Serving a hot breakfast to these competitors while raising funds for their continued success has made the Co op Pancake Breakfast a fitting and heartfelt kickoff to rodeo weekend.

Since 2023, the event has raised over \$4,100 for Manitoba High School Rodeo participants, helping offset costs associated with competing, travelling, and continuing their involvement in the sport. With strong community turnout and growing momentum, Valleyview Co op hopes to see the breakfast continue to expand in the years ahead and remain a dependable source of encouragement for local youth.

Everyone is welcome to attend, enjoy a warm meal, and help celebrate the start of another exciting rodeo weekend in Virden. Whether stopping in before work, bringing the family, or meeting friends for breakfast, guests will be contributing to a local tradition that continues to bring people together for a good cause.



# Flipping through history

By Lauren Halowaty  
EMPIRE-ADVANCE

For over three decades, the aroma of fresh coffee and sizzling sausages has filled the Legion Hall on Saturday morning of Rodeo weekend. What began in the 1990s as a simple invitation from the organizers of the Indoor Rodeo and Wild West Daze has grown into one of Virden's most cherished traditions. The goal was simple: bring locals, visiting cowboys, and cowgirls together for a warm meal and a little community connection right before the annual Rodeo Parade. Since 2015, Lion Gerald Ogilvie has served as chairperson, keeping the grills hot and the tradition running smoothly year after year alongside his fellow Lions.

That spirit of connection is nothing new for the Virden Lions Club. Chartered back in 1956, the club has been a cornerstone of the area

for decades, quietly raising and reinvesting over \$1 million into local charities and projects. While Lions Clubs International works globally to tackle massive challenges, like preventing avoidable blindness, raising diabetes awareness, fighting hunger, protecting the environment, and supporting families facing childhood cancer, the local club channels that same heart directly into Virden. Beyond flipping flapjacks, the Virden Lions keep busy operating the local campground, maintaining and renting out the Lions Hall, and stepping up whenever the community needs a hand. The Lions Hall is always graciously looking for new volunteer members as well and to help clubs recruit new members, Lions Club offers several membership options to community members who want to volunteer and serve their communities as Lions, which can be found on their website.

Of course, feeding a hungry town before a parade takes a full team effort. Behind the scenes early Saturday morning, a dedicated crew of

Lions and their spouses work together to precook the sausages, while Lions take to the outdoor grills behind the hall to flip hot stacks of pancakes. The magic of the morning extends far beyond the club itself. Every year, friendly faces from local financial institutions, Sunrise Credit Union, CIBC, and RBC, volunteer side-by-side with the Lions, pouring coffee, tea, and juice and handing out full plates to neighbors.

The breakfast is also a story of local generosity. Parrish and Heimbecker graciously donate the pancake batter each year, and a donation jar sits near the door to help cover basic expenses. In true small-town fashion, the Lions have never set a fixed ticket price for the meal. They believe the real value of the morning isn't measured in dollars, but in the community, spirit shared over a plate of food.

When Saturday morning of Rodeo weekend rolls around, the Legion Hall remains the best place in town to start the day offering good food, great neighbors, and a wonderful cause to celebrate together.



**Pancake Breakfast Fundraiser**

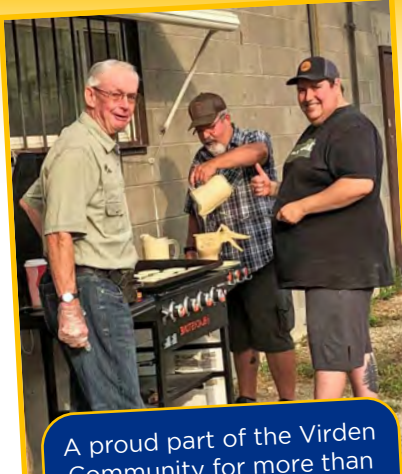
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# Westman on Wheels Show and Shine, Thursday August 13

By Lauren Halowaty  
EMPIRE-ADVANCE

Fifty-eight years after Virden hosted its very first rodeo, a group of local car enthusiasts decided that 2017 would be the perfect year to host a car show. Held in conjunction with the downtown Virden events during Wild West Daze, the show turned out to be a roaring success. The momentum didn't stop there. In 2019, those same automotive lovers decided to make things official, founding the "Westman on Wheels" Facebook page to help spread the word and keep the community connected. Since then, the event has really hit its stride. Last year, the weather was absolute perfection, and attendance hit a high with over 165 registered vehicles, proving yet again to be a wonderful success. This car show is truly for everyone. People from all walks of life and all ages are welcome to attend.

The variety of wheels on display is unmatched; Westman on Wheels has hosted everything from historic relics like a 1927 Model T to military tanks, miniature tractors, motorcycles, demolition derby cars, dragsters, and dirt oval racers. Simply put: if it has wheels, they want you to roll on down and join the fun! The Westman on Wheels Show & Shine, held in partnership with Piston Ring, takes place Thursday, August 13th from 5:00 to 8:00 PM at the Virden Farmers Market site on 6th Avenue South in Virden. Admission and vehicle registration are free, for more details or questions, contact Murray (204-851-6903) or Kevin (204-512-0681).



SUBMITTED PHOTO

The crowd gathered to see all the beautiful vehicles at the show and shine August 14, 2025.



# Welcome to the Virden Rodeo!



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 GERRY HOLMES MEMORIAL AWARD 

# Kevin McKinnon to receive rodeo's volunteer award



Kevin McKinnon and his family.

SUBMITTED PHOTO

By Anne Davison  
EMPIRE-ADVANCE

Kevin McKinnon is the 2026 recipient of Virden Indoor Rodeo & Wild West Daze volunteer award-the Gerry Holmes Memorial Award, co-sponsored by the rodeo and the Holmes family.

Some 500 volunteers are the lifeblood of rodeo weekend, Virden's signature event, a team of unsung heroes who put their shoulder to the work to create a weekend of excitement at Virden Indoor Rodeo & Wild West Daze.

With a great love of rodeo, Gerry Holmes left a legacy of exceptional and long-standing volunteerism. In 2007, the inaugural year, the award was presented posthumously to her.

Western Rodeo Chair Lonnie Brown is pleased to see Kevin named to this award.

"Kevin's been on the (rodeo) board for years. He worked his way up doing the jobs that needed doing. You've got to honour people like that," said Brown.

Under cowboy boots and hooves, the dirt has to be just right, a foundation to withstand barrel racing at breakneck speeds, the dig and slide of roping horses, and bucking stock's twists.

Kevin started as the dirtman, driving the tractor, grooming the special rodeo dirt. It's stored, sifted to eliminate stones and used year after year. Sparks Sand & Gravel play a part in the dirt work too. Kevin and Lonnie ensure that it's level and has just the right moisture content before they invite barrel racers in to test the dirt.

This installation begins Monday of rodeo weekend. High density plastic is installed to protect the arena boards and then the iron goes in – the shoots and pens. Much of this after people get off work for the day.

Kevin is in charge of lighting, picking up and placing oilfield lighting on the grounds.

"We need good lighting all over the grounds, because

people have horses there 24 hours a day for Thursday, Friday, Saturday," says Kevin. "They even come Wednesday now, because the first day of High School Rodeo is Thursday."

A light and power source is also installed at the end of the curling rink for the Saturday afternoon tailgate party and evening dance.

Kevin takes care of maintenance and fuel for the rodeo equipment-side by side, arena groomer and reefer trailer to keep supplies cool.

"There's a ton of jobs that people don't even think about," he says, adding, "You know, we have an amazing group of volunteers, an amazing committee that puts hours and hours and hours into that rodeo."

In fact, rodeo planning meetings take place throughout the year. With a keen interest to make this event the best each year, Kevin attends.

"He rarely misses meetings," said Brown, adding wryly, "He can be a little hard on tractors." He explains, "He broke the glass in the door of a tractor during one rodeo." He chuckles, "We like to not let him live it down."

Volunteers don't have to be perfect, but with a background in oilfield work, and currently with DC Septic & Water, Kevin brings valuable know-how.

"He's handy to have on the board," says Brown who counts McKinnon as a personal friend.

Rodeo has been a lifelong interest for Kevin, since an uncle introduced him to the sport as a youth. He rodeoed in high school and now says he's a hobby roper. He usually enters team roping in the rodeo.

His family enjoys horses. Kevin's wife, Meghan McKinnon, rides as does 15-year-old Caleb. The girls, Raegan, 6, and Riatta, 8, are into shows and barrel racing.

Reflecting on his part in rodeo weekend, Kevin says, "Virden rodeo has won Rodeo of the Year numerous times for a reason, and I think that is a reflection of the unreal board and group of volunteers that we have in Virden. "It makes it pretty cool to be a part of it."

Lonnie is pleased for Kevin's award and says, "It's an honour to have that carriage ride in the arena. I'm really glad we chose Kevin for the Gerry Holmes award."

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# Boot, Scoot and Burger

By Lauren Halowaty  
EMPIRE-ADVANCE

Giddyup, Virden! The annual Corex Rodeo BBQ is back and ready to kick off the local Rodeo weekend celebrations with some legendary, free Western-styled hospitality! Dust off your cowboy boots and head on down to Victoria Park on Thursday, August 13, 2026, from 11:00 AM to 2:00 PM for the best lunch celebration in town. It's the perfect excuse to sneak away from your 9 to 5 and fuel up.

Corex is wrangling up a classic, mouth-watering BBQ lunch complete with sizzling burgers, hot dogs, chips, cookies, and ice-cold drinks, and it is all entirely free of charge with no donations requested! The entire Corex team will be driving the chuckwagon, personally grilling, serving, and handing out treats as a massive thank you to our incredible community. So come rope in some fun, enjoy the beautiful shade and green grass of Victoria Park, and tap your boots



PHOTO BY JESSICA COULTER

Cooking up some beef! Photo from 2025 BBQ.

to the awesome music and entertainment rustling up in the background. Corex can't wait to see you there for a wild west good time!

**Ready for the Rodeo Fun!**



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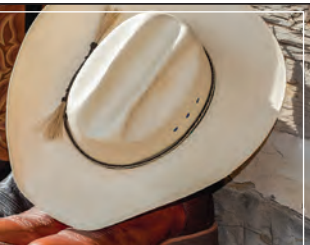
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DEMOLITION DERBY



# Virden gears up for a smash hit summer

**By Beth McConnell**  
EMPIRE-ADVANCE

Virden is about to get loud. The annual Virden Demolition Derby roars back into town on August 16, 2026, promising one of its biggest showdowns yet — with over \$15,000 in payouts and a full slate of crowd-pleasing events that celebrate the grit, creativity, and chaos of derby culture.

The action kicks off at 1:00 PM, giving fans plenty of time to grab a seat, soak in the atmosphere, and watch drivers push their machines — and nerves — to the limit.

**A Full Lineup of Heart Stopping Events**  
This year's derby features multiple classes, each bringing its own style of carnage:

- Large Car 1st: \$4,000 2nd: \$2,000 3rd: \$1,000
- Trucks 1st: \$1,500 2nd: \$750
- Small Car 1st: \$1,000 + 50% of entries 2nd: \$500
- Chain & Bang 1st: \$1,500 2nd: \$750
- Powder Puff 1st: \$500 + entries

Special awards add even more excitement, including Best Dressed (\$250), Mad Dog (\$1,000), and Sportsman (\$500) — celebrating everything from showmanship to sheer fearless driving.

**Admission & Important Notes for Spectators**  
Entry fees are family friendly:

- 13 & up: \$15
- Ages 6–12: \$10
- 5 & under: Free

One crucial reminder for everyone attending: bring cash. There are no debit machines on-site, and cash will be needed for admission, concessions, and any extras throughout the day.



When Jason Creller waves the starting flag, it's go time. Photo from the 2025 Delmolition Derby.

FILE PHOTO

**For Drivers: Registration & Tech Support**  
Competitors can reach out directly for rules, registration, and technical guidance:

- Rules & Registration: Kris Hay — 204 908 0911
- Tech Questions: Jody Braybrook — 204 851 2143

Most classes require a minimum of three entries, so drivers are encouraged to register early and help fill the roster.

### A Day Built for Community and Chaos

The Virden Demolition Derby has become a summer staple — a place where families gather, engines roar, and the community rallies around a uniquely thrilling tradition. With major payouts, a stacked lineup, and the promise of unforgettable collisions, this year's event is shaping up to be one of the best yet.



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