

Stampede Queen contest co-ordinator Laurie Sharland is dedicated, supportive and a friend

Editor's note: There are many people in Medicine Hat who have made a difference in one way or another. Each week one of these people will be featured in the Weekender.

KAREN SEGAL
Of The News

Laurie Sharland smiles easily, a throaty laugh emanating from her, filling her office at a travel agency.

A tour co-ordinator, Sharland's office wall is not filled with photos of Australia, Europe and other foreign destinations.

Instead, one wall is covered with pictures of Medicine Hat Exhibition and Stampede rodeo queens.

This July, Sharland, volunteer co-ordinator of the queen contest, will crown her 23rd Stampede Queen.

"I've got two years to go — after 25 years I'll decide if I'll retire," she says.

She points proudly to a photo of Wendi Lund and Nichole Hope — the 1992 queen and princess.

"She's like a mentor. She holds it all together. When we were first crowned she guided us through everything," says Hope.

Cheryl Ellis, the 1975 queen, remembers Sharland well.

"She was very helpful, very supportive. She always made you feel really special, gave you a lot of self esteem.

"Once she's become your friend she's a friend for life," says Ellis.

Sharland loves rodeo.

"I firmly believe in our exhibition. It brings in a lot of people and maintains our wonderful western heritage."

She also firmly believes in the queen contest.

"The big thing with our rodeo queen contest is that it's not a beauty pageant.

"There's no emphasis on that — there's no swimsuit part of it. Thirty-five per cent of marking is on horsemanship and 25 per cent on speaking. That's 60 per cent.

"The rest is on grace, finesse.

"I don't see how you could ever class this as a beauty contest."

Twenty-three years ago, Joe Fisher, President of the Medicine Hat Exhibition and Stampede for 1968 and '69 asked Sharland to take over co-ordinating the queen contest.

"I knew she was interested in young people.

"I picked a good one. She's very dedicated. She's done a super job," says Fisher.

"The queen contest had been dropped and so Joe approached me about it. At first I thought, why pick me?" says Sharland.

She built the contest up over the years.

"She has done a fantastic job co-ordinating it. The Medicine Hat contest is a model for rodeos across Canada," says Dann Sodero, General Manager for the Medicine Hat Exhibition and Stampede.

"She handles it in a very professional way."

Professionally and patiently, says Dode Minor, the 1991

SURROUNDED — Laurie Sharland, Stampede Queen contest co-ordinator, is surrounded by photographs of past and present queens, princesses and Miss Rodeo Canada winners.
— News photo
Shaughn Butts

Stampede Queen and now Miss Rodeo Canada.

Minor remembers a car ride with Sharland on the way to the Calgary Stampede parade.

"She said don't forget anything (at the hotel). We were driving and I said I'd forgotten my chaps.

"She wasn't upset — she didn't say 'I told you so.' She arranged for us to be dropped off.

"It was busy, there was so much traffic — she didn't say a mean word.

"She's the top organizer for me and the biggest support system I've got," says Minor.

Sharland has been co-ordinator of Miss Rodeo Canada for the last seven years.

"These girls prove themselves in so many areas — they have absolutely excellent horsemanship.

"Medicine Hat is the only place in Canada to have had three Miss Rodeo Canada's. That speaks very highly of our contest here."

Seven years ago, Ralph Murray, General Manager of the Canadian Professional Rodeo Association, asked Sharland to join the Miss Rodeo Canada board.

"I was only at three meetings before I was elected chair-



man," she laughs.

"I first started as general manager at the Medicine Hat Exhibition and Stampede. I knew at that time if she was

asked to do a job it was usually done very thoroughly," says Murray.

"I asked if she would consider getting involved in the Miss Rodeo Canada pageant and she agreed. She's been the catalyst in making it what it is today."

Sharland recently stepped down as chairman of Miss Rodeo Canada and is now its co-ordinator.

"Young people are our lifeblood — in rodeo or in anything," says Sharland.

Sharland is involved in just about anything. A pair of roller skates are on a plaque in her office, given to her by someone who knows just how much time she spends running around.

She instructed five-pin bowling for 18 years.

She's helped teach George P Vanier School students to bowl and swim.

"I must have spent 18 years at the side of a pool," she laughs.

"A city is only what you want to make of it.

"I love Medicine Hat. It's an excellent city to grow up in and probably retire in."

Rhythm Of The World

Continued from Page 16
Wednesday morning they'll set up the stage for their all-new show Rhythm of The World.

Thirty students will head to the elementary schools in Redcliff to tell where they come from and some of their cultural differences.

UP WITH PEOPLE — Some 130 students from around the world blend popular hits, traditional favourites and international pageantry in the all-new Rhythm Of The World show which they will perform May 26, 8 p.m., at the Cypress Centre.

