

Tribute to “The Flagman” slated with World’s Toughest Rodeo

Written by Marla Morehead
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Although the World’s Toughest Rodeo is known as one of the nations’ most exciting professional rodeo live events, it is also respected for another special attribute; each show opens with God and Old Glory. 2013 brings a tribute to our heroes, including local firemen, policemen, and EMTs, as well as the military, both veterans and active duty soldiers. But through a unique Facebook promotion, fans of World’s Toughest Rodeo were able to nominate a Hometown Hero and a unique individual was selected that is a hero in many hometowns across the nation.

Larry Eckhardt from the Quad Cities area, known as “The Flagman,” has taken it upon himself to honor soldiers that have paid the ultimate sacrifice in a very heartwarming fashion. Though Eckhardt never served in the military, he assumed his patriotic duty after attending a funeral six years ago in Galesburg, IL. "We had a local soldier go down and the citizen turnout was great, but I didn't think there were near enough flags," the former International Harvester employee says. Eckhardt purchased 150 flags and began hauling them in the back of his pickup truck to military funerals across Illinois, soliciting help from American Legion and Veterans of Foreign Wars (VFW) posts to stake the Stars and Stripes. He now has over 2500 flags and awaits the call and travels to the hometown of soldiers all across the nation.

He arrives the night before and solicits local volunteers to line the funeral route with the flags he has purchased through donations as well as personal investment. provided these communities the ability to support the families in a very meaningful way and this outpouring of group support helps the families begin to heal. Taking little credit for this, Larry is a true hero in every sense of the word. World’s Toughest Rodeo will provide the first 1,500 fans each night with a flag as we raise them in praise of a man that has raised the spirits of so many through his personal initiative.

The 2013 edition of the World’s Toughest Rodeo will feature top professional rodeo competitors in Bareback Riding, Saddle Bronc Riding, Bull Riding and Women’s Barrel Racing, comedy of John Harrison, Professional Rodeo’s 2012 Comedy Act of the year, award winning bucking horses and bulls of Three Hills Rodeo as well as the greatest show on dirt...But the finale event is BACKWARDS Bull Riding, as Brandon Lindsey, World’s Toughest Rodeo Bull Fighter attempts to wrap his legs around the bull, Crazy Train’s horns, lay face down and ride for 8 seconds. You won’t see it anywhere else.

It’s an action packed, star studded show. Tickets start at just \$18 and kids tickets half price

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every day at www.ticketmaster.com or iWireless Box Office.

For more ticket information: www.iwirelesscenter.com. For event and entertainer information :
www.wtrodeo.com. For more information about Larry “The Flagman”
www.youtube.com/watch?v=TNJ9umv10EM