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Annual rodeo gets ready to ride



FILE: DAVID BRO, CONTRIBUTING PHOTOGRAPHER
The Rancho Mission Viejo Rodeo kicks off with an opening ceremony Saturday at 3:45 p.m. Here, Bailey Miller carries a flag at a past rodeo.

The San Juan Capistrano event and fundraiser also features a bulging purse.

BY ERIN DONNELLY
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San Juan Capistrano's upcoming Rancho Mission Viejo Rodeo has lassoed a total of \$1.5 million for charity as it gears up for its 15th running.

Hopeful rodeo champions will flock to Orange County this weekend to

compete for \$250,000 in prize money, a purse so large the event is dubbed "America's richest two-day rodeo."

The cowboys square off in bull riding, saddle bronco riding, bareback riding, steer wrestling, tie-down roping and team roping. If they come out on top, they could qualify for the National Finals.

Gates open at the Rancho Mission Viejo Riding Park at 1 p.m. Saturday and the opening ceremony begins at 3:45, followed by a concert at 6 by Chancey Williams and The Younger

Brothers Band.

Adults pay \$30 and kid tickets are \$10. The events continue Sunday at 10:30 a.m.

A week of festivities includes a tequila tasting at the El Adobe de Capistrano Restaurant tonight.

The rodeo first kicked off 15 years ago after the O'Neill-Avery-Moiso family decided to pay tribute to Orange County's equestrian roots.

Proceeds from the rodeo will benefit The Shea Center for Therapeutic Riding in San Juan Capistrano and CHOC at Mission hospital.