

First female director named

Sponsor hospitality committee member appointed to Rodeo's board of directors

By **CINDY SANTOS**
The Salinas Californian

For the first time in the history of the California Rodeo Association, a woman is serving on the organization's board of directors.

Last year, Cyndie Fournier-Ferrell was selected as one of several new appointees.

"I'm honored by the recognition," said Fournier-Ferrell, who serves as chairwoman for the California Rodeo's sponsor hospitality committee. "It's a groundbreaking position to have."

The process of choosing new members for the board includes a formal series of steps: an initial nomination issued in writing, a preliminary vote involving a committee and a final vote involving all the board members.

"When I received my badge, I received a standing ovation," she said.

Fournier-Ferrell, a Salinas native who

CYNDIE FOURNIER-FERRELL

n **AGE:** 43

n **EDUCATION:** Degree in agricultural business management from California Polytechnic State University, San Luis Obispo.

n **OCCUPATION:** Works in the sales department at Dole Fresh Vegetables.

n **EXPERIENCE:** She has been a volunteer for the California Rodeo for 25 years, including 12 years as chairwoman for the sponsor hospitality committee.

n **PERSONAL:** She lives in Salinas with her husband, George, and two daughters, Alyssa, 11, and Lauren, 8.

attended the Rodeo as a child, has been a volunteer for the California Rodeo Salinas since becoming a judge on the calf-dressing competition in 1980.

In 1989, she joined the sponsor hospitality committee, which serves the Rodeo's sponsors and VIP guests, and five years later she became the committee's chairwoman.



PROVIDED PHOTO

Cyndie Fournier-Ferrell is serving on the California Rodeo Association's board of directors. She is the first woman to hold the position.

"We used to serve about 400 people per day, but now we serve about 1,800 people a day," Fournier-Ferrell said.

All committee members work in regular jobs outside the hospitality industry, she said.

"We come together to make this awesome event happen," Fournier-Ferrell said.

The Rodeo's 100-plus member sponsor hospitality committee was featured on the 2004 series premier of the Food Network's "BBQ with Bobby Flay."

Besides her Rodeo work, Fournier-Ferrell, 43, is the vice president and hospitality director for the California International Airshow, another huge annual event in Salinas.

She also volunteers with her two daughters' Girl Scout troops and is a parent volunteer for the Washington Union School District.

Fournier-Ferrell said her mother, who was also a Rodeo volunteer, inspired her to help out.

"It's a chance to give back to the community," she said.

And, of course, she likes rodeo events, especially bull riding and barrel racing.

"I used to go to the Rodeo as a little girl, and I started volunteering when I was 17," Fournier-Ferrell said. "And I haven't missed a Rodeo yet."