

2014 Texas Regional Utility Locate Rodeo

by JimBob Sims

“Welcome, rodeo fans!” These were words that I was quite accustomed to hearing having grown up in the Texas Panhandle as the son of an amateur steer roper, the brother of a high school rodeo champion and myself loving to rope at one time in my life. But on a beautiful South Texas Saturday, those words took on a different meaning than what most might think of when you speak of rodeo. Texas811, with the help of numerous volunteers and a few sponsors, put on the Second Annual Texas Regional Utility Locate Rodeo on Saturday, May 17 at the TEEX/H.B. Zachry Training Facility in San Antonio, Texas.

The Locate Rodeo is a competition held each year for utility locators statewide to compete for recognition in their field as the most accurate locator. The winners of the competition are those who properly mark the location of underground utility lines in a timely manner. The competition is broken up into divisions: gas, power, telecommunication or water. The winners from each division will represent Texas at the International Utility Locate Rodeo to be held on the campus of Emory University in Atlanta, Ga., on Aug. 9.

“Locate technicians serve a crucial role in the one call process; protecting our infrastructure and ultimately keeping individuals safe when digging,” said Mike Losawyer, President of Texas811. “Even when excavators do the

right thing and contact Texas811, without the locators’ services, there’d be countless utility line strikes resulting in injury, repair costs and inconvenient outages. We are proud to hold this competition and give these utility locators some recognition and the opportunity to show off their skills.”

This year’s competition included the use of Texas811’s newest public awareness tool, the Texas811 Foodwagon! Rick Pollard and his gang of volunteers cooked hamburgers and hot dogs for everyone in attendance. Many of the locators brought family and friends with them as well to help cheer on the competitors. This worked out great as Rick and his crews were also serving up snow-cones to the children (and adults!) as the afternoon warmed up. With some country music playing in the background, it truly was a family event. This is surely something we hope will continue and grow in the years to come.

Of course, none of this would have been possible without the assistance of many others. Texas A&M Engineering Extension Service (TEEX) provided the location for the second year in a row. Many thanks to Mark Konwerski and Cox Utility Services, Inc. for sponsoring the meal. USIC, LLC; CobbFendley; and Vivax-Metrotech helped to provide an official T-shirt for everyone in attendance. Susan Stepanski (Austin Energy) and her daughter Missy came down Friday to help set up the course and serve as assistant judges for the power division. Numerous Texas811 employees volunteered their time to come to San Antonio and help with the event. And last, but certainly not least, Alison Goodgame, who provided guidance and technical assistance, as well as serving as

co-master judge along with me. Words cannot express the gratitude I have for each and every one of these folks who helped to make this event a success. It surely required a lot of teamwork and absolutely everyone did their part to make the rodeo what it was.

And hats off to all the competitors! Without them, this would not have been much of an event! Many of them drove a “country mile” to participate in the rodeo. The competition was stiff, but in the end, **here are the winners of the 2014 Texas Regional Utility Locate Rodeo:**

Gas

1st – Marcus Ogas / USIC, LLC
2nd – Modesto Castilleja / CobbFendley
3rd – Al Obregon / USIC, LLC
4th – Joshua Wiggins / USIC, LLC

Power

1st – Greg Rowe / USIC, LLC
2nd – Craig Brown / SAM, INC
3rd – Marcus Ogas / USIC, LLC
4th – Tom Johnson / USIC, LLC

Telecom

1st – Joshua Wiggins / USIC, LLC
2nd – Billy Clark / CobbFendley
3rd – Modesto Castilleja / CobbFendley
4th – Al Obregon / USIC, LLC

Water

1st – Marcus Ogas / USIC, LLC (Will compete in Atlanta in the GAS division)
2nd – Miguel Mendez / USIC, LLC (Will represent Texas in Atlanta in WATER division)
3rd – Ken Leddy / USIC, LLC
4th – Jemard Baker / CobbFendley

Congratulations to everyone and good luck to Marcus, Greg, Joshua and Miguel as they move on to Atlanta to represent Texas in the International Utility Locate Rodeo!