

Member Benefits Include the NHSRA Crisis Fund

Information on eligibility and coverage for a special program supported by annual “Basket Contests” and other fundraisers

By Lyn Ankeny

If you have been around rodeo awhile, you might have heard about a program the PRCA instituted in 1990 called the “Justin Cowboy Crisis Fund.” The fund was established by the PRCA to financially assist professional cowboys who have been injured as a result of a rodeo related incident. What you may not know is that you have a very similar benefit available to you as a member of the NHSRA.

The NHSRA Crisis Fund was established in 1996 and is funded by fundraisers, donations and auctions sponsored by the NHSRA. There are two major fundraisers held each year at the National Junior High and National High School Finals. These two fundraisers are the Basket Contests where every state and province is invited to show off their local culture, cuisine and style in the form of a “basket” that will be entered in a silent auction at each event. If you have never seen them, you can’t imagine the creativity that goes into them. There is a dedicated area at each National Finals Rodeo for the displays and oftentimes they take up a great deal of real estate in the trade shows. Basket Contest events have raised up to \$37,000 for the season; all of which goes into the NHSRA Crisis Fund. Since the fund was established, we have paid out \$162,483 dollars in assistance to our rodeo families who have applied for this grant over the years.

To be eligible for assistance, the student must be a member in good standing. The injury or death for which assistance is requested must have occurred during a NHSRA-sanctioned event or in immediate and direct transportation from the contestant’s home to the event or coming home from the event and the applicant must not be in violation of any NHSRA rules or regulations at the time of the injury or death.

Coverage for this grant money includes medical expenses, dentist, doctor of osteopathy, chiropractor, and registered nurse or licensed therapist expenses including hospital expenses. In addition, grants can be used for transportation for a deceased person from the location to home, funeral expenses when the death or accident oc-

curred at a NHSRA-sanctioned event (or in the immediate and direct transportation from the contestant’s home to or from such event) and unplanned travel in the event of a death or life threatening injury to a family member that occurs while the contestant is at a State/Provincial or National Finals Rodeo (up to \$1,500 maximum for travel related to the event).

At the discretion of the Executive Committee, consideration of grant applications includes (but is not limited to) the participant’s other resources and liabilities, participant’s family resources and liabilities, the nature and severity of the accident and injury, the probable duration of the injury, the resulting death of the participant due to the injury, the extent of insurance coverage/other support available to the participant, special needs of the participant (wheelchairs, ramps, specifically equipped vehicles, etc.) and the nature and extent of the participant and participant’s family needs. Grants cannot exceed \$15,000 to any single eligible participant according to current guidelines.

In addition, the NHSRA Executive Director has the authority and discretion to grant up to \$2,500 with or without a formal application to any single eligible participant (subject to availability of funds), in the form of emergency funds that can’t wait for Executive Committee approval.

Crisis Fund grants are not made for property damage such as injury or death of animals, damage to vehicles, trailers, stock, tack or other equipment with the exception of emergency repairs, transportation, clothing or housing in order to assist the injured participant to return home (such award shall not exceed \$1,000 subject to availability of funds).

For more information on the NHSRA Crisis Fund, including the Application for Financial Assistance form, please contact the National Office.

Two families’ experiences

In 2013, Caryssa Silva qualified for the Hawaii state junior high finals in pole bending and barrel racing. To compete, she

had to fly from her home island of Kauai to Oahu. Her second-place finish in pole bending qualified her for the National Finals, and her rodeo-loving parents agreed to make the trip to Gallup, New Mexico, 3,173 miles across the Pacific Ocean.

Of course, it’s hard enough to get the students from Hawaii to nationals, much less their horses, so the Silvas arranged to lease a horse for the competition. During their first trip to the practice pen at Gallup, the unfamiliar horse reared and fell on the 80-lb. seventh-grader. She was able to get up but complained of soreness and had difficulty breathing. Mom Elise called 9-1-1.

At the local hospital they quickly put in a chest tube to inflate her lungs, pronounced her condition life-threatening, and sent her by helicopter to Albuquerque Children’s Medical Hospital. She was in the ICU unit for several days but recovered quickly and was able to be a spectator at the final day of the rodeo.

Because of the collapsed lung, her doctors insisted that she shouldn’t fly for at least two weeks due to elevation changes in high altitude. “The airlines gave us a difficult time changing flights because we had traveled on mileage, and charged us outrageous fares which we couldn’t afford,” said Elise. “The Crisis Fund helped us by purchasing new airline tickets to return home. They also provided finances for additional car rental and hotel expenses. Since we were out of state, our medical insurance wouldn’t cover the \$29,000 medivac air ambulance bill. The Crisis Fund paid a portion of it.”

The Silvas were not aware of the Crisis Fund until after the accident. “Our president of KKHSRA (Kauai Keiki and High School Rodeo Association) notified me that the NHSRA might be able to help,” said Elise. “They were very helpful, patient and cooperative.”

Both of Coryssa’s parents and her little sister, Casera, 11, participate in rodeo.

“We were saddened that Coryssa wasn’t able to experience her pole bending run in the National Finals due to the accident,” Elise said. “But we are grateful for

her testimony, that we serve a Mighty God who heals and protects! Upon our return to Hawaii, she mounted up on her black horse, Twistin Haiden, and got over her fear and rode him. About two weeks after, with confidence, she entered our popular annual Koloa Days Rodeo barrel race, and came in eighth out of 30 women. Since then, she has entered many other rodeos and continues to fulfill her love and passion with horses and rodeo.”

Kyle Bloomquist is a second-generation rodeo cowboy from Raymond, Minnesota. A seasoned veteran of mutton bustin’ and steer riding before conquering bulls and broncs and roping steers and calves, he has qualified for Nationals throughout junior high and high school. Now a senior, he plans to get his PRCA permit after he turns 18 in March.

Last May 30, he was leading the state bareback riding standings and was second in saddle bronc riding when his season got derailed at a high school rodeo in St. Peter, Minnesota. In the saddle bronc riding, his right foot caught in the stirrup on his way to the ground.

The result was spiral fractures in both his tibia and fibula, the two bones of the lower leg. And that resulted in surgery to insert a rod into his right leg, to stabilize



Coryssa Silva of Kalaheo, Kauai, Hawaii, is now a sophomore and competes in barrel racing, pole bending, goat tying, team roping, breakaway, cutting and reined cow horse.

and reinforce the broken bones.

Being in the hospital would make anyone grouchy, but the day after surgery, the usually stoic Kyle seemed out of sorts and in more pain than would be expected. The nurses notified the doctor, who diagnosed him with compartment syndrome. “The doctor explained it as like having a heart attack in your leg,” said Linda Bloomquist, Kyle’s mother.

According to WebMD.com, “Groups of organs or muscles are organized into areas called compartments. Strong webs of connective tissue called fascia form the walls of these compartments. After an injury, blood or edema (fluid resulting from inflammation or injury) may accumulate in the compartment. The tough walls of fascia cannot easily expand, and compartment pressure rises, preventing adequate blood flow to tissues inside the compartment. Severe tissue damage can result, with loss of body function or even death.”

Hearing that last potential complication – “even death” – will get parents’ attention.

Kyle was hurried back in for another surgery. And then he required another.

“In all, he had five surgeries in 10 days,” said Linda.

This all took place more than 100 miles from the family’s home. Linda missed two weeks of work while she stayed at the hospital, and Kyle’s father, David, made multiple trips.

“Our national director, Tony Oftedahl, was in touch with us immediately, getting us set up with the crisis fund,” said Linda. “By the time we got back home, we had a check that helped cover some of my lost income plus our travel expenses.” The fund also helped with medical expenses.

Next came four months of physical therapy. During that time, Kyle went to the state finals, where his lead in the standing still gave him a shot at the bareback riding championship. “He had to put a foot over every horse, in other words make an attempt, to still qualify for the championship, but another guy won enough to take over the lead,” said Linda. Kyle ended up the reserve champion in bareback and saddle bronc riding.

In September, Kyle was still weak but he was back in the saddle – well, not the bronc riding saddle, but one he could dally to – and started entering team roping. “He’s got a really good partner and they are doing well in the team roping, and he’s third in the bareback riding,” said Linda. He hasn’t started entering the calf roping or saddle bronc riding again yet, but plans to soon. And he’s looking forward to collegiate rodeo in the fall. 🐾



Kyle Bloomquist of Raymond, Minnesota, plans to get his PRCA permit after he turns 18 in March. Complications from spiral fractures of his tibia and fibula (lower leg bones) could have cost him more than his riding career.