



### *Spotlight On...*

#### **The Kim Equine Pavilion and Education Center**

Several years ago, a group of ranchers from Kim, CO rustled up a brilliant idea; building a rodeo events center in Kim that would not only draw new people to the area, but hold on to those who might otherwise leave. This project, lead by Kim rancher RC Patterson, is testimony to the driving spirit and determination of the area's generational ranching community.

With the black cloud of the expansion of the Piñon Canyon Maneuver Site looming heavily over all of rural Southeastern Colorado, especially Las Animas County, this project could not have come about at a better time. Families from Kim and the surrounding area want people to know that rural Southeastern Colorado is a vibrant, thriving community. The population per square mile may be small, but the people, their land, and their way of life single-handedly contribute more to the economy of this area than any other industry. Building a rodeo events center will only strengthen this fact.

The Kim Equine Pavilion and Education Center (KEPEC) will serve as a contestant-based facility, not necessarily as a spectator facility, although spectators will certainly be welcome. To have a top-notch rodeo events center such as KEPEC in eastern Las Animas County is paramount. "Southeastern Colorado is thought to have more rodeo competitors per capita than any other place in the United States", stated Patterson, adding that may or may not be entirely true. But the point is that rodeo is big business in Southeastern Colorado. "Rodeo in Southeastern Colorado is like Little League is to urban America. It's a natural part of the heritage and culture of the area", continued Patterson. So KEPEC and rural Southeastern Colorado are a perfect fit!

KEPEC is not just an idea anymore; it is currently under construction. "We expect phase one (a partially covered arena) to be completed by the end of the month, and the facility is expected to be utilized this summer", said Patterson. "One of the first events will be tied with a grand opening and fundraiser. This event will hopefully be held in July. We are planning on continuing with phase two construction (which will be covering approximately another 100' of the arena) towards the end of the year or first of next year. When completed, KEPEC will be 350' x 230' with a free span of 180' x 350'. The competition arena will be 145' x 290' and there will also be a covered warm up arena of 50' x 100'. It is going to be very nice."

KEPEC is expected to provide an economic boost to the area's economy as well. "It's hard for some of the younger generation to remain in the Kim area", said Patterson. "It's not that they don't want to stay, but their parents or grandparents may still be running the family ranch, and there's simply not enough income to support another family." It is hoped that KEPEC will provide incentives for younger folks to return to, or remain in the area by providing jobs and top-notch rodeo competition opportunities. It is also hoped to draw new families to the area who have a strong connection with rodeo.

KEPEC will also benefit the students in Kim by offering an equine class and Rodeo PE which will all be coordinated with college programs to qualify for college credits. There is the intent to also host a variety of educational seminars that could include rodeo, ranch or agricultural related topics.

To find out more about events at KEPEC stay tuned by going to [www.pinoncanyon.com](http://www.pinoncanyon.com)