



June 27, 2012

**NEWS RELEASE**

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## **Buckles 'n' bling: Westin sharpens skills for Metal Art Showcase**

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CALGARY – Dori Westin has gone from the anvil's ring to Western bling.

The Calgary Stampede's annual Metal Art Showcase was created a decade ago as a spinoff of the Stampede's World Championship Blacksmiths' Competition (WCBC) — and Westin, of Rocky Mountain House, Alta., has had a boot firmly planted in each world, so to speak.

Westin spent half a dozen years as a farrier in the Cochrane, Alta., area in the early 1980s. And after seeing an advertisement for a jewelry-making course in Calgary in 1986, she's had her Smith 'n Westin Silver Company shingle out for more than a quarter-century.

As a silversmith, Westin's forte is in jewelry and buckles. And she's submitted shimmering artwork for the past several years to the Stampede's Metal Art Showcase and Metal Art Auction, which will hold their 10<sup>th</sup> annual edition under the auctioneer's gavel on Saturday, July 7 at the Victoria Pavilion.

"Sometimes . . . yeah, it is a pretty tedious job. Not as glamorous as one would think," she says with a laugh. "But it is always a fun process to start with something that looks so blah, and turn it into something so beautiful.

"As you're making a piece of jewelry, when you're doing the soldering, it looks all burned . . . but by the time you're done, you think, 'Wow.' The transformation is striking. It's really something to see."

The Metal Art Showcase, which begins at 6:30 p.m. on Saturday, July 7, and the Metal Art Auction, which follows at 7:30 p.m. on the same evening, involve two distinct categories — Traditional Forged Metal Art and Non-Forged Metal Art. Traditional forging includes works of art created on the blacksmith's forge. Non-forged work encompasses other methods, including welding, cold bending, stretching, wire artistry, and Westin's specialty, silversmithy.

With the steady growth in entries over the years, the Metal Art Showcase and Auction will be awarding prize money for the first- and second-place entries in both categories for the first time in 2012. And with a surge in the number of non-forged entries, the prize money has been boosted to match that of the forged category, with a hand-tooled Stampede championship buckle part of the prize package as well.

As a result, the winner in both the forged and non-forged categories will take home \$1,500 and a championship buckle, while the runner-up in both classes will claim \$750.

There's a third element to the Metal Art Showcase, too, and this year it will take place earlier in the day on Saturday, July 7 with even more of an air of immediacy.

The Potluck Forging class, part of the WCBC, will take place at 1 p.m. under the Big Top, with teams of one to four blacksmiths given 90 minutes and unlimited scrap metal to create spontaneous works of art.

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This year, for the first time, members of the audience will be able to bid on these pieces at a live auction held immediately following the Potluck class, directly outside the west entrance of the Big Top. All proceeds of this sale go directly to the artists.

Traditionally, Westin has submitted one-of-a-kind jewelry for the Metal Art Showcase — a sterling silver and 10-karat gold bracelet with golden spurs and boots, a pendant with a rearing horse and lariat — and was reserve champion in the non-forged class in 2010. However, it's fair to say that the Smith 'n Westin Silver Company's claim to fame — Dori's maiden name was Smith, by the way — is buckles. She designed the WCBC champion's buckle for many years, as well as prize buckles for the Canadian National Miniature Horse Show for a spell. She's produced the championship buckles for the World Professional Chuckwagon Association's stop in Rocky Mountain House since its addition to the WPCA tour in 2010. And her buckles also adorned the waistline of several Japanese actors involved in the 1990 samurai film *Heaven and Earth*, partially filmed west of Cochrane.

"I'd gone to Las Vegas for the first year the National Finals Rodeo was held there, and a friend of a friend had done all the buckles for the NFR. It really didn't click until six or seven months later, when I saw that ad for a jewelry-making course, and I thought, 'I've got to do that,'" recalls Westin.

"I worked with silversmiths in New Mexico and Nebraska — hanging out in their shop, seeing how they did it, then coming home and trying to teach myself. I kind of did it the difficult, long way," she recalls with a chuckle. "But I developed my own style. When I was still shoeing horses, I was selling jewelry out of the back of my truck — and I got busier and busier. I guess what attracted me, originally . . . I have always been really artistic. I used to do a lot of drawing when I was a kid. It kind of confirmed a connection with the Western world."

The Stampede will be webcasting all events being held in the Scotiabank Saddledome and the Big Top this year. Visit <http://ag.calgarystampede.com/saddledome-ustream> for live streaming of Saddledome action, and <http://ag.calgarystampede.com/big-top-ustream> for events under the Big Top.

Following the 2012 Stampede, groundbreaking will begin on the Agrium Western Event Centre, the largest project in Stampede history. For details and artistic renderings of this magnificent 150,000-square-foot agriculture showcase and competition venue, scheduled for completion in 2014, visit <http://corporate.calgarystampede.com/about/park-development/agrium-western-event-centre/>

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The Calgary Stampede is a volunteer-supported, not-for-profit community organization that preserves and promotes western heritage and values. The Stampede contributes to the quality of life in Calgary and southern Alberta through its world-renowned 10-day Stampede, year-round facilities, western events and several youth and agriculture programs. All revenue is reinvested into Calgary Stampede programs and facilities. For more about the Stampede, visit [www.calgarystampede.com](http://www.calgarystampede.com).

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