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COMMUNITY NEWS

# Roam the ranch with Alligator Ron to benefit Broward Boys & Girls Club

By **SCOTT LUXOR**

SUN SENTINEL CORRESPONDENT | MAR 03, 2022



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The 25th annual Ranch Roam, an event that raises money for the Boys & Girls Club of Broward County, will take place March 26 at the Green Glades Ranch owned by rodeo and ranching legend "Alligator" Ron Bergeron and his wife Ali. The two are shown in front of the saloon on his property in Weston. (Scott Luxor / Contributor)

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There will be a lot of horsing around an upcoming event, but there's a purpose: to raise money to help create opportunities for students in Broward County.

The 25th annual Ranch Roam, an event that raises money for the [Boys & Girls Club of Broward County](#), will take place March 26 at the Green Glades Ranch in Weston owned by rodeo and ranching legend [“Alligator” Ron Bergeron](#) and his wife Ali. Bergeron got the moniker of the famous Florida reptile because he used to wrestle alligators along with being a real-life cowboy.

The turnout of donors and participants is expected to be over 1,000. The event and the venue has grown over the year. The outdoor portion takes place under a large rodeo structure that accommodates people, animals and equipment.



A horse grazes at Green Glades Ranch. (Scott Luxor / Contributor)

Supporters are invited to show up in western fashion, ride a mechanical bull, play at casino tables, enjoy line dancing and listen to country music performers like Rodney Atkins. Participants also will be able to hang out at the Alligator Ron Saloon, a replica of an 1800s-era bar that was built to honor the culture, heritage and roots of old Florida.

## How it all started

Bergeron's history as a ranch and rodeo legend has roots that reach back eight generations in Florida. That's about as far back as you can go with American settlers, other than Native American tribes.



“My family entered Florida in the 1800s,” Bergeron said. “My great grandmother was born here in 1882. They ended up at Lake Okeechobee before the turn of the century and then they moved to Davie around 1910. I grew up in Davie when there were only 500 people there.”

Despite the sparseness of the population in South Florida in the mid-20th century, Bergeron said he loved the atmosphere and the lifestyle that he grew up with.

“The most wonderful thing and blessing that I have in my life is to be raised in the culture, the heritage, the roots and the identity of Davie, a cowboy town,” he said.



The 1800s theme inside of Ron Bergeron's saloon where he has historical photos and other vintage artifacts from the era. (Scott Luxor / Contributor)

Because of the small town ranch culture of Davie decades ago, Bergeron said that cowboys became his heroes. It also inspired him to make the fundraiser into an event that harkens back to the old ranching days.

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“I rodeoed professionally and even wrestled alligators for 20 years,” he said. “It is our culture. It’s our heritage and I’m very blessed. This whole event is really about celebrating what Florida was in the 1800s.”

The origins of the throwback event started back in 1996, when South Florida auto entrepreneur [Rick Case](#) approached Bergeron about doing a fair to benefit the Boys & Girls Club.



Bergeron's saloon vintage artifacts from the era. (Scott Luxor / Contributor)

“That fair became a 10-day event at the [Bergeron Rodeo Grounds](#) in Davie to benefit the 12,000 children who are helped by the Broward club,” Bergeron said. “They wanted to do a ‘Ranch Roam’ at a real operational ranch as part of the event. I was very blessed that they came to me because I saw the benefits to the community.”

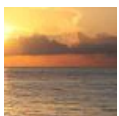
## Impact on Broward youth

Bergeron said that he and his wife Ali have seen the positive impact that the Boys & Girls Club has on youth.

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“The Boys & Girls Club does such a great job for this community,” he said. “They spend their money very wisely. And the benefits are dramatic.”

He said the importance of the club to kids is even more relevant today because they need to be looked out for after school and in other ways since a majority of families have parents who both work.



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“There’s a tremendous benefit for the kids to have a place to go to and not be on the streets,” he said. “Plus, there are educational programs, sports and different leadership opportunities that they can make use of in the Boys & Girls Club. It’s a wonderful thing to be a part of.”



From left, Ron Bergeron; Michael Assunto, general manager at DEX Imaging; Matt Organ, co-CEO and director of events at Boys & Girls Clubs of Broward County; and Ali Bergeron. The four are shown inside the saloon on Bergeron's property where Ranch Roam will take place March 26. (Scott Luxor / Contributor)

Matt Organ, co-CEO of the Boys & Girls Club of Broward County, said he feels blessed that the kids have “Alligator Ron” to open up his home to them and to the Ranch Roam event so they can get more exposure to the community and raise much needed funds.

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“We never lose sight of the fact that this is his private residence that Ron opens up for us,” Organ said. “This is his home. We’re very respectful and very humbled that he has allowed us to come out here for the last 25 years. It’s made an incredible difference to the club that over \$12 million has been raised for our 12,000 youth.”

Some of the youth volunteer at the event, which connects them to the community and enables supporters to connect with the kids.



The 25th annual Ranch Roam will take place at the Green Glades Ranch owned by local rodeo and ranching legend “Alligator” Ron Bergeron and his wife Ali. (Scott Luxor / Contributor)

“We bring about a dozen or so of our youth out here to the event,” Organ said. “We’re looking at possibly having our kids even sing the national anthem. We want them there, because it’s very important for us that the folks that are donating their hard-earned money see exactly where it’s going.”

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