

2022 SGBI HALL OF FAME

Diana Ruiz

By Jessie Topp-Becker,
Managing Editor

Four decades ago, life looked a little different than it does today. For example, Santa Gertrudis Breeders International (SGBI) didn't have its own computer. Also back then, genetic selection using expected progeny differences (EPDs) was in its infancy and had not yet experienced widespread implementation. Yes, things were done a little differently 43 years ago, but, through it all, one constant for the association and its loyal Santa Gertrudis breeders has been Diana Ruiz, SGBI registration and member services specialist.

Ruiz joined SGBI as a key punch operator in 1978. Since SGBI didn't have its own computer in those days, she would enter information such as new cattle registrations or transfers on a cassette tape before taking it to a local company in downtown Kingsville to be processed.

Over the years, Ruiz has worn many hats at the association. Through it all, the highlight has been building relationships with breeders from coast to coast.

"I have made numerous lifelong friends through past and present employees and our wonderful membership," she says. "I am so grateful to have been a part of this association for as long as I have."

When you've been around Santa Gertrudis breeders as long as Ruiz, you

have a front-row seat to watch as families grow and the next generation of breeders become association leaders.

"Another highlight is to see these young breeders, for example, Wes McDaniel and Yancey Strait, who started out as juniors, ended up on the SGBI Board and then as SGBI presidents, and now their children are showing," she shares.

With decades of experience, Ruiz is the go-to person at the association, and SGBI members are quick to sing her praises.

"Diana's loyalty to the SGBI family is second-to-none," says Gene Kubecka, Wendt Ranches, Bay City, Texas. "If there is an issue and you want to get the correct answer, Diana is the person at the SGBI office with the knowledge to get it figured out."

Delmo Payne, Grandview Farms, Hamilton, Ala., shares similar sentiments as he reflects on his experiences working with Ruiz since 1986.

"Since I was a new purebred breeder in the '80s, Diana quickly became my go-to girl," Payne shares. "I am sure I had many stupid questions in the old days, but after talking with Diana, I felt perfectly comfortable that the issue would be handled, and she never made me feel uncomfortable. Many breeders across the country feel the same way."

Ruiz has worked with eight executive directors during her career; most recently with Webb Fields who joined the association as executive director in 2020.



"Initially, it was a real comfort for me coming on board knowing that I had someone with 40-plus years of institutional knowledge on staff," Fields says. "Diana has served as a real security blanket for me and a resource no matter the situation as she has served in about every role over the years and seen just about every situation you can imagine."

It's certain that things look different at SGBI now than they did 43 years ago: SGBI now has more than one computer in its office, EPDs have become standard, and association staff and leadership have come and gone. But through all the ups and downs, Ruiz has served the association and its members with excellence (and a smile), and for that we are all forever grateful.

In recognition of her longtime service and countless contributions to the association and its members, Diana Ruiz has been named a member of the Santa Gertrudis Breeders International Hall of Fame. 🐾

FAR LEFT: Diana enjoys spending as much time with her children and grandchildren as she can. Here Diana (second from right) poses with her three children (left to right) Liana, JJ and Laura.

LEFT: In 2015, Diana (right) was honored by SGBI President Curtis Salter (left) with the President's Award for her many years of service, dedication and work for SGBI and its members.

