

# National Armed Forces Freedom Ride AZ

On Saturday May 18, 2013, the 4th Annual National Armed Forces Freedom Ride Arizona took place. This Armed Forces Day gathering was held at Chester's Harley Davidson 922 S. Country Club Dr. in Mesa. Armed Forces Day is recognized as a day to honor every segment of the United States Military.

Organizers in more than half the states in the Union were hosting similar events this day; in a coordinated effort to express appreciation to all those who serve and have served in the military. The beneficiary of this event in Arizona was AZ MAM ~ Military Assistance Mission.

The morning's Opening Ceremonies and other presentations during the day included the POW/MIA/KIA Honor Guards, Mike from Buckeye Fire Department on bagpipes, and of course the National Anthem. Aurora the Eagle & Joe Miller from Liberty Wildlife were there, as well as David Hoshaw and Tank the Marine Dog, this event's Mascot.

After the Opening Ceremony, the riders headed out on a short run of about 80 miles. Stops were at American Legion Post 58 in Fountain Hills, Post 117 in N Phoenix, and Post 2 in Tempe before returning to Chester's. We heard positive comments regarding the ride.

Entertainment was provided by 74th Street Band. Vendors included HogWear, Shooter's World, Disabled American Vets, East Valley Veterans Education

Center, K9's for Vets, and SgtDzzHot-Dogzz. At the MAM booth you could purchase support merchandise including patches & tees.

At the raffle tables were members of the Devoted Dolls, assisting with ticket sales and answering questions. Raffle prizes included several liquor baskets; offering Jager, Crown Royal, & JD. There were also collectibles, apparel, hotel stays, military commemoratives, memberships to Shooters World, jewelry, & more. Among the fundraisers was a drawing for a set of hand-made derringers in an antique presentation case. Another drawing was for a patriotic-themed quilt.

Ernie Lizarraga was the guest speaker; offering comments on behalf of Veterans and the Price of Freedom. Among the afternoon's presentations were a Warriors Medal of Valor to Ernie and an Appreciation Plaque to Skeeter for her efforts in putting this event together over the years.

The winners' trophies were hand-made plaques. It was surprising to find out that the artwork was drawn all in Sharpies. High hand was held by Stacy Harris. She received a plaque and \$300. Low hand winner was Ella Harris; receiving a plaque and \$150. The 'Better Luck Next Time' winner was Lou G, who collected a plaque and \$50. Congratulations to Sheila Orwin for being the 50/50 winner.

Event sponsors & supporters also

include Chester's HD, KDKB's Ruby Cheeks, KFYI's Mike Broomhead, Payne & Sons Construction, & Chuck Franklin. Law Tigers sponsored the Remembering Our Fallen Arizona Exhibit.

Skeeter shared with us that more than 250 people attended. We observed about a dozen different organizations represented, along with many independent riders. At the time of this writing, the final figure of this day's donation was still pending. A check will be presented to MAM on Sept 21 during an event being held at American Legion Post 2. We do know that in the last 4 years, this ride has raised over \$22,000 for our Military Families in times of emergency. Well done!

The mission of the Military Assistance Mission is to, "Provide financial and morale aid to our current Arizona active duty military, their families, and wounded warriors regardless of overseas deployment status." This comes from their website.

Military service puts strain on families left behind at home, as well as those who are deployed. This organization is doing what it can to help; focusing on personnel E6 and below. Donations are always needed and welcome. Read more about MAM by visiting their website at <http://www.azmam.org/>

God Bless Our Troops ~

B&B

Add'l photos from gallery at <http://azfreedomride.webs.com>

