

MARINES TOYS FOR TOTS RIDE 2013

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The morning of Saturday November 23 was chilly ~ hmmm... cold. Okay, I guess it depends upon who you asked. It was mid 50's and wet. Although, the rain DID subside as forecasters predicted. The Valley was under a patchwork of heavy grey clouds, with bits of blue peeking through, as we made our way to Fountain Hills and the American Legion Post #58. This was the destination of the Marines Toys for Tots Ride 2013; organized by our friend Sue Ashe aka Brat. When we arrived, there was a handful of bikes in the parking lot and a collection of cages.

We'd all been watching the sky and the weather reports to see how the day would fare. The schedule was pushed up by an hour, so folks who wanted to come out but were put off by the rain had extra time to sign in. Due to the weather, anything planned to go on outdoors was moved indoors. While a less than ideal day, everyone there was enjoying themselves and the mood was very positive. The Post was decorated, people were feeling festive, and the 74th Street Band was performing inside the bar. They were doing an outstanding job, as usual.

A meal ticket came with your registration. The food was set up in the large meeting room. Lunch was a baked potato bar, offering an array of toppings such as chili, veggies, bacon, etc. This gave everyone a chance to set their meal up just the way they wanted. It was very tasty.

125 riders took the challenge and made the ride; and props to them for doing so. There were 3 routes set up to bring everyone to Post 58 in Fountain Hills. The ride packets were very well presented, with detailed info regarding the ride. The routes were listed step by step, turn by turn. Even someone unfamiliar

with the area could feel comfortable in venturing out on this run.

West side riders gathered at The Salty Seniorita, 8011 W Paradise Ln, in Peoria. Stops were at American Legion Posts 53 [Buckeye], 5 [Phoenix], and 2 [Tempe]; then Evil Twin Custom Cycle @ 433 W Main St in Mesa. Distance was posted at 103 miles, with run time estimated at 2 hrs, 45 minutes.

East side riders met up at Chester's Harley-Davidson @ 922 S Country Club Dr, in Mesa. Stops were at Sorella Caffé [Queen Creek], Post #9 [Florence], River Bottom Saloon [Florence], and Post #27 [Apache Junction]. Distance was estimated at 120 miles, with run time of about 2 hrs, 44 minutes.

A Scottsdale Run departed from Renegade By Mod @ 9343 E Shea Blvd. The stops were Post #107 [Phoenix], Connolly's Sports Grill [Phoenix], Roadrunner [New River], and Post #34 [Cave Creek]. This trip was estimated at 94.5 miles & 2 hrs 11 min.

Ride participants received a safety pin to collect beads from each stop they visited. When they arrived at Post 58 they received a raffle ticket for each of the beads they had.

The raffles were also set up in the meeting room. Kudos go to Sarah Casey, Post Bar Manager and raffle gal extraordinaire. She & her team collected and organized 4 big tables of items up for raffle. It was a very diverse collection of goods, with most being donated by various Post members. The raffle was set up in the Chinese Auction format, with the winning ticket numbers posted to a board at the end of the day. Also drawn near the end of the day was the 50/50. It was won by Kyle; who donated the \$160 prize to the Marines.

As the day progressed, more and more people ar-

rived; some on bikes and others in cages. The afternoon's weather cleared a bit and some people drifted to the outdoor patio. There was a pause as the Post 58 trumpeter presented a Marine Corps tribute.

In following up with Sue after the event she shared that the total attendance overall for the day was about 300. "While, of course, we all wish that the weather had been sunny and bright for a much larger turnout, the Marines still collected a U-Haul full of toys and a \$4000 check... I thank everyone from Post 58 that helped make the ride event happen, the 74th Street Band as always who rocked the place, and the generous sponsors that donated at various levels. Our Santa sponsors were Chuck Franklin Law, Linda Gerchick / Gerchick Real Estate, and Dr Tom Hill Family Dentistry; along with many more at the other levels. Plus a big THANK YOU to all of the people that came out to support the cause to help some children in Maricopa County have a brighter Christmas morning." Sue has such passion for this cause. We look forward to seeing what she has in mind for next year's Marines Toys for Tots fundraising project.

While it felt kind of strange at first to be wishing people Merry Christmas before we'd even reached Thanksgiving; by the end of the day the Christmas and Holiday Spirit was definitely alive and well. There was such a great group of people here, who stepped up to help the Toys For Tots program and came out despite Mother Nature's setbacks. This was an excellent way to start off the Holiday Season. We were very glad to be there.

Bruce & Betsy

