

6th Annual Marines Toys for Tots Ride



November 24 was a perfect day to be out on a bike, with a clear blue sky & temps in the 80's. For those of you caught up in the Thanksgiving Day hubbub, it was time to get out for a ride. What better cause could you find than the Marines Toys For Tots? It was an excellent idea to make use of this date for the 6th Annual Marines Toys for Tots Ride sponsored by ALR Post 35.

Many of you are probably familiar with this run as an event organized by former Marine Jesse Hendrix & his wife Forbes, of ALR Post 35. They recently adopted 2 toddlers and stepped down from chairing the event to focus more time on their new family. This year, the committee was headed up by Sue "Brat" Ashe and Cristina "Angel?" Sipos-Coverly.

Sign-in was at Chester's Harley-Davidson, 922 S. Country Club Dr. Mesa, AZ. Stops along the ≈ 100 mile route included Skunk Motorsports, Mesa; American Legion Post 58, Fountain Hills; Olive Mill, Queen Creek; and American Legion Posts 39 in Gilbert & 91 in Chandler. Last stop was Post 35 in Chandler.

There were some 420 sign-ins. It was a good mix of people attending; including riders of all ages. We noted more than a dozen organizations represented, plus many independents. American Legion Post 35 is a beautiful place; with outdoor facilities including grass, trees, a stage, shade, even a fountain. Tom Will, Commander of Post 35, welcomed everyone & then introduced event organizer Sue Ashe. She extended thanks to the committee members & those who had helped bring the run together. Certificates

of Appreciation were handed out as well.

Special recognition and thanks included 74th Street Band for donating their fee to play back to the event and to Debbie John Enterprises for donating the food for the day.

Many thanks go out to all of this event's Corporate Sponsors: Chester's Harley-Davidson, Law Tigers, Desert Deuce Inc, 74th Street Band, Queen Creek Olive Mill, Black Billy Bikes, Refrac Systems, Debbie John Enterprises LLC, Budweiser, Coors, D&W Auto Service LLC, Farmers Insurance agent Stephen Hintz, UPS Stores # 3710 & # 0039 ~ both in Mesa, Chandler Blueprint, Springfield 'Pool of Knowledge', and Dobson High Football.

There was a BIG collection of raffle items, including gift cards for gas, massage, auto service, groceries, & Jeannie's Pet Grooming; collectibles, apparel, and riding gear; plus several certificates for service from Evil Twin Custom Cycles.

There was a huge collection of gifts for the kids, including dolls, trucks & cars, bikes, games, sporting goods, plushes, and skateboards. It is estimated that T4T got 1000 major toys from this event, plus another 1000 or so stocking stuffers like Hot Wheels, etc. East Valley's Toys For Tots satellite location is at Fulton Ranch Promenade in Chandler. We learned that this is run by retired Marines and their spouses and that everything raised in Maricopa County stays in Maricopa County. By the time this event took place, they were out of toys; the 3 area T4T distribution centers having already given away to families in need the \$40,000 worth of toys that they started

the year with, plus 2 semi-truck loads of toys donated by an anonymous corporate sponsor. So today's donation was particularly appreciated. As of Nov 30, there were 300 East Valley families who had yet to be contacted regarding Holiday assistance. While T4T gets all the attention this time of year, they welcome donations all year long in preparation for the next Holiday Season. Call 602-465-6264 Monday thru Friday 9a-5pm if you'd like to make a contribution.

While it was expected that the proceeds of this day would all go to the Toys For Tots Program, that was not the case. From the \$13,000 raised, approximately \$3000 went to expenses. \$5,000 was actually donated to T4T, as Post 35 chose to re-direct the other \$5K to other ALR programs. While it can be agreed that the monies will certainly still go to worthy activities, this was not in the spirit of the event's purpose. As a result, organizer Sue "Brat" Ashe shared with us that she is moving on to greener pastures and will be announcing a brand new Marines Toy Ride event to be hosted by ALR Post 58 in Fountain Hills in late 2013. She has been assured by the ALR Post 58 Riders group that every penny and toy donated to the ride will end up in the hands of the Toys for Tots Organization.

All controversy aside, this was an excellent effort on behalf of the less fortunate of our community & the organizers deserve kudos for making the day such a success.

*Bruce & Betsy
xtra pix from Brat*