

# SSGT Matthew Dennison Memorial Poker Run

The 1st Annual SSGT Matthew Dennison Memorial Poker Run took place on March 22nd. The ride started & ended at Waddell's Long Horn Corral in Buckeye, AZ. This event was open to all vehicles. Everyone was welcome. Proceeds of the day benefited local Veterans.

Whenever people gather in the name of a loved one, it is a special and memorable time. As Maria Hurley, my contact for this run, described so well, "This was a very bittersweet day for us, as we remember him and realize he left us a year ago..."

Maria and her husband, a Viet Nam Veteran, first met Matthew at the American Legion. They were impressed enough with this young man to set up a blind date between him and their daughter. That's gotta say a lot about the fellow right there ☺ The two immediately hit it off. As time passed, he became part of the family and as it turned out, a marriage proposal was on the horizon.

Then Matthew Dennison was killed on March 24th, 2013, in a motorcycle accident. Maria shared that, "March 24th was one of the saddest days our family and Matthew's friends had to face." They were determined to "make something positive out of something so horrible and sad."

Maria & her husband are riders as well, participating in many benefit runs. They had attended a fundraiser for homeless veterans, and through this event became aware that it is a much bigger problem than they'd realized. So when time came to plan a memorial event for Matthew, it was the perfect choice for them ~ to



have all proceeds benefit homeless Veterans.

So here are some details from this inaugural run...

Ride stops were at American Legion Post 12 in Wickenburg; Trackside Bar & Grill in Surprise; and Booty's Wings, Burger, & Beer in Buckeye. SKE karaoke, Steve Witting donated the music. Guest speakers were Mike Ferguson, CO AZ VFW Charities and Bobby Jones, VFW Homeless Chairman. There were two vendors: Red Label Vapor donated half their sales from their stand and also donated two e-cigs at \$75

value each for the raffle. Dragons in Chains, Nate Mann, also donated a custom chain and earrings for the raffle; a \$90 value. There were many donations from West Valley local businesses, including a motorcycle paint job valued at \$2,000 from Premier Coach Auto & RV Body Shop. Waddell's Long Horn Corral in Buckeye allowed them to hold the event and donated \$300 cash along with many other items to raffle [ie shirts, posters, key chains, ...]. Maria commented, "The prizes never ended."

100% of the day's proceeds were donated to [www.azvfwcharities.com](http://www.azvfwcharities.com). They were able to give a check to the VFW in the amount of \$2,100. The VFW is using these monies toward the building of a new homeless shelter, for Veterans who need temporary housing.

They are already getting many inquiries about next year's run. The date is set for March 21, 2015.

This event, on behalf of homeless Veterans, will allow Matthew's name to carry on for years to come. Maria explained, "I want it to be known that this is all in memory of our SSGT Matthew Dennison. I want his name to always be remembered and I want to honor him as a U.S. Air Force Service Member."

Thank you Maria, for sharing a bit of Matthew's story and for allowing us to help you keep his memory alive.

*Betsy*

*photos by George Leon, VFW, Tolleson*

