

Torch Ride for Special Olympics

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On Saturday March 31, the NEW Torch Ride for Special Olympics staged at The Pavilions on Indian Bend in Scottsdale. While this is the 13th time this run has taken place, it is the first time that it did not end at CycleFest.

No doubt there are a lot of people out there wondering why that is. Well, to make a long story short, cost to participate as an 'official' AZ Bike Week event has reached such a height that the organizers felt that they should shed their ties to the 'official' promoters in favor of raising more money for the charity they support.

The ride was broken up into two groups; red bandannas for VIPs and yellow for everyone else. The VIP group rode out first; including members of the Outlaws band and some local celebrities. As the yellow group was waiting, you could tell there was mounting impatience to get *rolling*. We learned that the escort was waiting for the red group to get to Shea Blvd before departing.

Overall, it was a smooth run; with some 'rubber band' riding, but that's to be expected. Things were a little dicey getting launched, as a cage got 'confused' and thought it should be part of the parade. We observed that some riders split off from the procession as we went along... they had paid their entry & shown support; but were off to ride & spend the day elsewhere. This was a 'feet up all the way' run... still the only fully escorted one during Bike Week in AZ. All in all, the ride made it to Chester's Harley-Davidson at 922 S Country Club Dr. Mesa, AZ with no mishaps reported.

Emcee Ed Leclere addressed the attendees. It

was acknowledged that there were not as many riders as in years past, and everyone was thanked for their participation & support. Amid a number of announcements, he introduced Arizona USA's Queens of 2012... Teen, Miss, Jr. Teen, Mrs., and Ms. They in turn crowned Ms. Torch Ride 2012, Hanna Fox.

The Silent Auction had some very cool memorabilia up for bid, including signed photos & mementos from the music, movie, and sporting worlds. Ed auctioned from the stage a guitar signed by the Outlaws which included a private 'meet & greet'. The bidding was so tied up, that the band graciously agreed to sign a 2nd guitar and meet with both bidders... allowing Special Olympics to collect two \$400 donations. Nicely done ☺

Throughout the day a lot of people left Chester's; after all, the Outlaws concert wasn't until later. It was such a beautiful day to ride, it was completely understandable. As the afternoon rolled on and the shade began to move across the seating area, people started returning from their rides.

And as for the concert? If you missed this show, MAN did you mess up! The Outlaws put on an outstanding show. It was noted that they've been performing for 40 years. And guess what... They sounded just like they were supposed to! We all know you can't always say that about a group that's been playing so long.

The evening turned out to be an intimate gathering of dedicated fans. The band did not disappoint. This was a quality show filled with strong performances. The audience was very appreciative and engaged. Along with songs you'd expect to hear, they

previewed some new songs coming out on their upcoming studio album.

Due to the smaller nature of the audience, the band announced from the stage that they'd do a 'meet & greet' after the show. They were so good with their fans, signing autographs and posing with them for pictures. It was an opportunity for folks that they'd never have had at a larger show with a crush of people attending. That was pretty cool.

Chester's made a statement by separating the Torch Ride from the promotional machine of AZ Bike Week. Kudos to them for doing so. They did a good thing. Only an operation the magnitude of Chester's HD could probably get away with it.

So ... how'd it go? It was relayed to us that Special Olympics Arizona is pleased with how everything came together. Although donations fell short of this year's goal, we're told that SOA liked the *feel* of the event more than the ABW version. The athletes were more involved and the SOA organization had more hands-on control & participation in the event. It was agreed by all involved that the Torch Ride can be built on from here.

There you have it... next year's Torch Ride for Special Olympics, hosted by Chester's Harley-Davidson, will again wrap at the dealership. You know you'll enjoy the same quality entertainment as Chester's always provides at their events. We hope that you the riders will support the Special Olympics next year as you have so well in years past. In this case, the CAUSE is the excuse, not the destination.

Betsy & Bruce

www.SpecialOlympicsArizona.org/

