

Christmas Wrap

Christmas and the entire Holiday Season generates a calendar full of benefits on behalf of the less fortunate around our state. Groups host events to help feed people at Thanksgiving, ensure that kids have gifts at Christmas, and honor our Veterans. These are things that bikers do so well. Whether the events are large or small, the same big beautiful biker heart is at the center of it all. We are proud to share news here about some of this Season's events.

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For nearly 30 years, **Birds on Bikes**, sponsored by the Modified Motorcycle Association of AZ, has been helping the St Vincent DePaul kitchens feed people for Thanksgiving. It's a family-friendly event held on the Sunday before Thanksgiving; this year **November 19**. Scooter folk are invited to strap a frozen bird onto their bikes & ride with the MMA flock. Organizer Cindy Gates, member of MMA's Leather/Eagle District, sent along some details.

Riders departed from Charley's Place in Glendale and the Chandler Elks Lodge. It is a direct ride to St Vincent de Paul on Watkins in Phoenix ~ with no stops. Additional rider groups met up with the flock at St Vincent's for a total participation estimated at about 250. "We have quite a few groups that come on their own each year. We get HOG groups,



Spartan Riders MC, CMA {Christian Motorcyclists Association}, and Bikers for Christ to name a few." All-in-all about 300 turkeys, 200# of non-perishables plus about \$1000 in cash were donated.

Cindy added this note, "I always want to thank all that came out to support this cause. We did have News Stations 3, 5, and 12 this year. Channel 12 always does the Turkey Tuesday. I told the guy this year [we] would love to compete with the news station. Hopefully that would bring a bigger crowd. I think that would be fun. I know the station usually gets about 20,000 birds and a lot of cash. But I think it would be fun!!"

Thank you to Cindy for your 18 years {and counting} dedication to this event and also for sending news of this day for us to share with our readers.

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The 31st annual **Casa Grande Toy Parade & Auction** took place on Sunday **December 3, 2017**. Our thanks to organizers Kacy Stoneburg & Barbie Rebenstorf for your help with this report.

Sign-in for the Parade takes place at Dave White Park. This year approximately 350 people participated in the parade; with about 259 motorcycles being counted. There were also a few classic cars and trucks, a Casa Grande fire truck, and an AMR ambulance.

Kacy explained, "This is an organized, parade-style route escorted by The Casa Grande Police Department and volunteers from the Pinal County Sheriff's Office. Our parade route was disrupted this year due to road construction on Florence Blvd. Usually it is important for us to parade through well traveled parts of the city. It is a well known event each year and we love for our participants to be seen (and heard ;-)) by the citizens of the city. Initially we did have some issues with rerouting the parade. Michael, the owner of The Property, was able to talk to the Mayor of Casa Grande and get us back on track with an extended Parade route the took the group through town. Because it is a parade-style run the speed is around 15mph and took around 45 minutes. People

from the city camp out at places on the route to wave and wish us well."

Last stop again this year was 'The Property' on Gila Bend Highway, for lunch, music, a raffle, and live auction. Kacy added, "This year we served 283 lunches, ran out of food and almost filled up all the seating. Last year after filling up the seating at The Property they added additional tables for us this year and we almost surpassed that!" What a great turnout!

The band, Mogollon performed at The Property. "We consider them part of the family and they have been performing at this event for over a decade!"

They had a large 'harvest-style' raffle. Participants purchase tickets and place them in buckets for items they are interested in winning. Items were donated from local merchants, restaurants and even the local Funeral Home. "This part of the event is critical in raising funds to purchase toys and adds to the fun for our participants. This year we had over 60 items. In addition to the raffle we have a live auction for items of higher value. For instance this year we had an electric guitar donated by Mogollon."

It was clarified that, "This event is adults-only. We love the idea of continuing the event for children but by adults!"

The toys are distributed by Casa Grande Salvation Army. "This year we were able to provide the Salvation Army with 1,200 toys for distribution. Each year we try to surpass the year before. Last year we were able to give just over 1,000 toys so this was definitely a successful year." Congratulations!

Saying thank you... "Because this event has grown to the size it has it is near impossible to recognize everyone that helps make this event amazing. That being said we have a few that go above and beyond each year from donating items, services or time: On-Site Shooting in Casa Grande provides us with firearms at cost that we use to raffle off. This is a widely successful portion of the event now that raises a lot of funds for us. International Minute

continues on page 15

continues from pg 14

Christmas Wrap

Press donates flyers each year and assists us with banners, raffle tickets and more. They give us a great rate and they are able to print the products quickly. They have been assisting in this event for many, many years. Budweiser via their local distributor, Hensley donates money to us each year and its goes a long way to pay for what little overhead we do have. Some other notable donors are: Casa Grande Fire Department, IAFF Local I-60, Airport Tavern, Cotton's Wonderbar, J. Warren Funeral Services, AMR, Tucson Harley Davidson and The Roughnecks Motorcycle Club."

This event always takes place on the first Sunday in December, so you can go ahead and mark your calendars for it. You can also find CGTP on Facebook at www.facebook.com/CGtoyparade

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Lexi's Legacy Toy Ride is a new event this year, taking place on Saturday **December 9th**. It was organized in memory of Lexi Schultz who died at 13 years old. From what we've read about her, even at such a young age Miss Lexi had a strong feeling of right and wrong; standing up for kids who were victims of bullying.

Biker Ernesto Najar organized the ride. Taryn Schultz explained, "Ernie and I met when Channel 15 did a news segment on Lexi and how she died; and how her last breaths were at Phoenix Children's Hospital after the entire ICU floor kept her alive by compressing her chest. He is a cameraman and after shooting the story, said he is from San Diego and they used to do a toy ride for a boy who passed there. And he is a biker. Would I be interested?"

In Lexi's name, this event supports the Phoenix Children's Hospital annual Toyland fundraiser. It was requested that toys donated specifically to be of a non-violent nature.

We learned from Taryn that "There was approximately 20 bikes and a few cars..." There were toy bins at Majerle's Sports Grills at Chandler Fashion Center and Desert Ridge in the week preceding the ride; where several people added their donations.

Riders enjoyed coffee & muffins at Papago



Park before riding out. Participants received a remembrance patch. Traveling as a group, the riders departed Papago Park and headed to Phoenix Children's Hospital to drop off the toys. Organizations represented on the ride included American Legion Riders, Gentlemen of Justice LEMC, and Phoenix Gentlemen MC. The staff met the riders to accept the donations and speak about their programs. About 70 toys were delivered.

Once the delivery was made at PCH, riders who gathered at Majerle's Sports Grill at Desert Ridge were given discounts for their participation.

Taryn sent along this note, "The riders (all strangers to Lexi) were so kind and generous showing up in her honor. There was a Dad who told us about Gracie, his daughter who had passed at Phoenix Children's Hospital as well. It was his first time back and when seeing a post, knew he needed to participate. Another Dad lost his son two days prior and would be flying out for his funeral but had committed to coming to Lexi's Legacy Toy Ride so he did. There was a biker who was supposed to work but wanted to participate so her teenage daughter filled in for her. The list goes on and on. Each and every one of them truly amazing people. I'm so grateful as Lexi's mom that they took their Saturday AM to come participate in a total stranger's daughter's honor." She continued, "I was overwhelmed with the kindness and support of the bikers who took time out of their weekend, and money to purchase a toy, and came to honor Lexi's legacy. Truly humbled. It was my complete pleasure to meet people like each of the bikers."

Thanks go to Sailor Cakes, My Realtor Kelly, and Majerle's Sports Grill for their support.

To learn more, visit Live Like Lexi, Inc online at <http://livelikelexi.com> and/or www.facebook.com/LiveLikeLexiInc/

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December 16, 2017 was the day for the nation-wide annual **'Wreaths Across America' Wreath Laying Ceremony**. This is a coordinated wreath-laying ceremony; held at Arlington National Cemetery as well as over 1,200 additional locations in all 50 U.S. states, at sea, and abroad.

From the WAA website, "A person dies twice: once when they take their final breath, and later, the last time their name is spoken." As the



wreaths are placed, the volunteers are encouraged to say the Veteran's name aloud; reflecting a moment on their life and service.

WAA in Arizona honors our departed Veterans at cemeteries throughout the state. At Phoenix National Veterans Cemetery, the ceremony hosted several hundred more visitors than in years past. We learned this from their Facebook page, www.facebook.com/pg/WAAPHX/ ...

"Just received our final wreath count for the 2017 ceremony... The number is: 7,110!! A full thousand over last year and as always our best to date. There is no way to express fully how exciting this is!! Each year the program grows. Each year we get closer to the ultimate goal of 65,000. Enough to have a wreath for every veteran interred at our location (a number that also continues to grow). THANK YOU every single person, company, community group, school and organization that has helped with fundraising activities. Stay the course and keep that momentum for 2018!!!" There are many more photos of the ceremony on their page as well.

If you have any questions about Wreaths Across America Phoenix, contact Tarra Matyas, 602-487-0970, tarramatyas2@gmail.com. She can guide you to information about WAA elsewhere in our state.

Learn more about the nationwide Wreaths Across America program at www.wreathscrossamerica.org/

Remember ~ Honor ~ Teach

Remember ~ our fallen U.S. veterans.
Honor ~ those who serve.
Teach ~ your children the value of freedom.

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Kudos to those of you who hosted and participated in these events. You can be sure that you made a memorable difference in people's lives this Christmas Season.



add'l photos [above] from : ACMC Toy Run * Steel Horse Saloon Toy Run * Superstition HD Toy Drive