

Riding for the Long Haul

Riding for the Long Haul is a day-long free event designed to remind and encourage motorcyclists about rider safety. It is hosted by AMSAF {AZ Motorcycle Safety & Awareness Foundation}. As Mick Degn, AMSAF Chairman says, "Safety is hard to sell or promote... If we can help save one life it is worth it."

This year's gathering took place at Desert Wind Harley-Davidson, 922 S Country Club Dr in Mesa; on Saturday, March 12.

Information booths provided presentations regarding Accident Scene Management, DUI reference charts, brain trauma, a variety of safety-oriented accessories and equipment, state-wide rider-training facilities, and more. Raffles and Silent Auction fundraisers were also taking place. There were numerous food trucks to provide eatables.

Yes, rider safety & responsibility can be kind of dry stuff... Yes, it's less sensational than a big-name concert with scantily-clad fender fluff strutting around. BUT if for just one day of the year riders would spend a bit of time to learn or refresh their memories about issues that will help keep them alive to get to that next concert... Well, as Mick said, "If we can help save one life it is worth it."

Understanding that, "Safety is hard to sell or promote..." AMSAF and a lengthy list of sponsors organized some remarkable giveaways and demos to encourage participation. They had some pretty cool stuff going on!

Everyone was offered a bingo-style card. You received stamps as you visited the various booths. The completed cards were then put into a drawing for a free trip to Laughlin. The package, valued at over \$2200, included four nights for 2 people, with cash & concert tickets; plus week passes for 2 for AZ Bike Week. Congratulations to winners Kamon & Aurora Garcia.

Spectators also got the opportunity to observe opposite ends of extreme riding control.

There was a pair of stunt riders from Southern California showing off their talents ... Stunter Megaman and Clint Ewing. Their performance is filled with all that "don't try this at home" stuff that is just so amazing to watch.

Then the Mesa PD Drill Team put on a demonstration. This team of 4 motor officers emphasized techniques and importance of controlled slow-speed riding. They were riding through a motorcycle rodeo course laid out with orange cones. They exhibited some impressive close-quarter riding also, as three bikes rolled through the course seemingly as though each was riding alone.

It was explained that with good training and practice, riders can control their bikes in slow-speed turning maneuvers & situations. Braking techniques were also discussed. According to information presented during this demo, the #1 thing police see at motorcycle wrecks is evidence of improper braking. In some situations a wreck can be avoided, if a pilot is adept at skills such as swerves and braking. Rider training and ongoing experienced rider training were encouraged as well as simply practicing basic skills daily.

Mick sent along a great followup, so we'll turn it over to him

Mick Degn, Chairman, Arizona Motorcycle Safety & Awareness Foundation (AMSAF)
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"We had a great event and attendance was up from last year. We figure we had around 500 with Bingo cards and discussions with vendors. Although we have not finalized the numbers totally yet, we are believing that we will net right around \$15,000.00. All of that money goes to get additional riders into Motorcycle Training here in the State. That will get about 55 more riders trained.

"In addition to this, we had a little over \$12,000.00 in donated items for raffles. Again, all the raffle items were donated by our Sponsors and Vendors.

"We gave out 20 Scholarships during the event and 15 took advantage of them.

"As we look back at the last two years, there is one thing that stands out, Safety is hard to sell or promote. We continue to build on this as we feel there are way too many Motorcycle crashes, injuries and fatalities. If we can help save one life it is worth it.

"Riding for the Long Haul is a Community

event. The State, Healthcare, Motorcycle Businesses, Insurance and Legal all came together to help promote motorcycle safety and awareness. THAT'S IMPORTANT.

"AMSAF is a 501c3 non profit Charity and so everything we do goes to help promote Motorcycle Safety and Awareness. Our Board is made up of Leaders within the Community who have a passion to help improve on these goals. They receive no salary or compensation and dedicate their time to help. We have an awesome Executive Board and Board who donates their time, attends every meeting and is very involved.

"At our event we post a lot of statistics on motorcycle crashes and fatalities because it helps understand what are the reasons for the crashes and fatalities. Many times we are quick to blame the cage driver and yet a lot of motorcycle crashes are due to alcohol, drugs and lack of training. That's why 'Riding for the Long Haul' is so important. We need to help educate and help reduce the crashes and fatalities.

"Event supporters that I want to recognize as Title Sponsors were Breyer Law, Law Tigers, Dignity Health, Governor's Office of Highway Safety (GOHS), Department of Transportation (ADOT) and AMSAF. In addition, we had many vendors and donors who helped out with being a vendor and promoting safety and donors who helped with donations for our raffles.

"In addition to our annual Ride for the Long Haul, we do weekly safety tips on Facebook and end up with a lot of hits on them. We even have other State Safety organizations follow us on Facebook. We are part of the Arizona Highway Strategic Safety Plan for Motorcycles. Our scholarship program is in all MVD facilities across the State and MVD promotes it on Facebook and television. We have a number of handouts that help promote motorcycle safety. Thank you."

Thank you Mick and the entire AMSAF organization for all you are doing to help reduce motorcycle wrecks in Arizona!

Bruce & Betsy

