

# RUN TO THE REZ #21

The 21st annual official Run to the Rez was held October 17-21 at the Apache Gold Casino and Resort in San Carlos, Arizona. 2024 was the biggest yet, attracting 720 registered riders with many more spectators and onlookers.

From the beginning, this motorcycle event has honored military veterans. Saturday's program at Burdette Hall in San Carlos, following a group ride from the Apache Gold Casino to San Carlos, displays respect for all warriors and all Nations. As townspeople in San Carlos show up in large numbers to cheer bikers on, the throaty voice of rumbling bikes amplifies the celebration. Joining a large group of bikers on the way to Saturday morning's program has always been fun, and townspeople enjoy bikers throwing candy to children as onlookers wave, take photos, and salute the riders.

"This run is all about honoring the veterans. It gets bigger and better every year," said John Bush, one of the first few Geronimo Riders of that small group to hold a ride honoring Veterans nearly 30 years ago. Bush is still leading Run to the Rez but he said it's not just him. "We couldn't do it without the volunteers, and we had about 25."

Burdette Hall's program honored Gold Star Family members, and two veteran Grand Marshalls of the November 11 Veterans Day Parade (Matt Hinton and Emerson Bayless). Each year the program honors a Viet Nam veteran too, and this year was combat veteran Jonathan Victor. Blankets and donations were given along with a cash gift from the Rez Riders IMC. A call to formation for all veterans concluded the program again this year.

On the strength of little more than an idea at first, but with dedication and the help of volunteers, Run to the Rez continues to grow. This year's Run to the Rez attracted people from Arizona, New Mexico, Washington, Texas, Wisconsin, New York, Minnesota, Colorado, Nevada, California, and Hawaii.

Bikers are aware that conditions change for every ride, and this year was no different. One rider from New Mexico described his ride to San Carlos with a wild jerk of his head to the side. It's what happens when the wind hits unexpectedly and describes a motorcycle ride like a song. "We were running against the wind" sang Michigan Rocker Bob See-

ger. To sing of wind is one thing, to ride in strong wind is to inhabit an adventure.

It's unlikely that everyone knows a bike rally can also be a spiritual event, but as participants listen to prayers offered for riders, and catch the sense of bike riders respecting one another, respecting the ancestors, Veterans, women, men, children, and the land, it's hard to ignore that something special is going on. Don't think of spiritual as something dour and serious. Spiritual is also a group of people having fun by dancing, singing, motorcycling, and giving gifts to one another.

Modern life demands that some things end to make room for the new; however, Run to the Rez has demonstrated a masterful form of keeping good traditions alive while adapting to new circumstances.

Traditions include raffle giveaways of \$5,000 worth of motorcycle-related goods at the Friday night gathering, music and the Ghost Dancers entertaining the crowd, cookouts and three meals for all registered guests, free casino play tickets worth \$30, free music, a bike show, and a poker run. Vendors also kept

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continues  
from page 12

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the crowd fed and watered and displayed gifts for sale.

Additionally, every rider and passenger registered for the ride received a ticket for a chance to win one of two Indian Motorcycles this year. The grand drawing was held Saturday night after a barbecue dinner, opening entertainment by Levi Platero, and followed by music headliners Los Lonely Boys. The concert was available and free to the public.

After the concert, the names of two Arizona lucky ticket holders, Melvin Lawrence from Fort Defiance and Stanley Willie from Round Rock were drawn from a large metal basket that was spun vigorously before a random pick for an Indian Scout and Indian Dark Horse Chieftain respectively.

Along with the Apache Gold Casino and Resort, sponsors like Indian Motorcycle Company, the St. Carlos Apache Tribe, the R100 Cattle Association, and the San Carlos Apache Telecommunications Utility, Inc., supported the run. For the first time, the Indian Motorcycle Company became a rally sponsor this year. Several Indian Motorcycles were available for demo rides to registered riders.

"Over the years, the rally has raised and given over \$200,000 to veterans and other organizations," Bush said. "This year we'll give \$20,000 to the St. Carlos Apache Veterans Association. We already gave \$2,000 to the American Legion and \$1,000 to the U.S. Marine Corps Birthday Celebration, both in Globe." {photos bottom right & center below}

This October was unusual with its cooler temperatures, rain, and gusty winds. Although winds were stronger this year, and rain came down a little harder, it was the same welcoming environment as it has been for years.

When asked why he came to the rally, the President of the Wisconsin Indigenous Riders, from Green Bay, Wisconsin said, "I support Run to the Rez and its mission of donating to Native American Rider groups. And after I was invited in 2017, I kept coming back."

The wind whispers, "We are all brothers and sisters, bikers and riders." That's why many return every year for Run to The Rez. Maybe you'll catch this next year. If you listen, you'll hear your invitation blowing in the wind.

By: Gregory Ormson,  
#motorcyclingyogig

See <https://gregoryormson.com> and the motorcycle tab for his "Resplendent Passages: Motorcycling Diaries in Soulcraft."

Photos from YogiG, Dr John Bush, Garrett Dauphars, Micki Dirtzu, & others

*As AZ Rider Motorcycle News puts a wrap on this last issue, I'd like to offer this note:*

*To keep anything going for 25 years takes an incredible amount of dedication. Betsy, and her late husband Bruce, demonstrated their dedication to all riders in our Arizona motorcycle community to an incredible degree, and they made their dedication and love public by their publishing of AZ Rider Motorcycle News.*

*To write all those articles, to take all those photos, to show up at all those events, to cover and promote local businesses and advertisers for all these years is nearly beyond belief, and yet we've all seen it.*

*Along with many others, I thank you for all you did to help keep this biker community informed and connected. With much respect, goodbye and aloha.*

