

AMSAF - Riding For the Long Haul



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Painted rocks... find them, post a photo to the AMSAF Facebook page &/or the Motorcycle Awareness Rocks group on FB then place them somewhere else to be found again. See how far they'll travel ~ carrying the AMSAF safety message with them as they go.

We attended the 5th annual Riding For the Long Haul, presented by AMSAF - Arizona Motorcycle Safety & Awareness Foundation, on Sunday March 3, 2019. This year's venue was once again the El Zaribah Shriners Auditorium in Phoenix.

When we arrived, there was a rider skills demonstration under way by the AZ Precision Motorcycle Drill Team that was impressive to watch. These pilots were riding their full-size baggers in slow, close-quarter maneuvers that included tight turns and quick stops. Experienced bikers watching from the sidelines were heard to say that these riders make what are definitely difficult maneuvers look easy. In addition to the Arizona PM Drill Team, rider skills demonstrations were presented throughout the day by Chandler PD, Mesa PD, Phoenix PD, ProRider Drill Team, and Team AZ. It was a very popular attraction.

Anybody who thinks they have 'mad skills' on a motorcycle needs to stand at the barricade and watch these pilots go through their paces. It gives you a whole different appreciation. They are always amazing to watch. We've heard riders who we know have been riding for years emphasize the importance of keeping skills sharp, rather than relying strictly on experience, history, or habit. It is important to continuously practice. Mick Degn, AMSAF Executive Director commented, "It is so easy to get into bad habits riding or not know what to do in a situation where all of a sudden something is in front of you."

They did a presentation on how to pick up a fallen motorcycle. I must say though, as helpful as the demo can be, each bike used had highway crash bars... Meaning that the bike 'fell' or was 'dropped' to no more than about a 45 degree angle. No disrespect intended... But that's not exactly 'on the ground'. For that they'd need to select a different style bike. For folks who own less 'dressed' bikes, there's more to learn about picking it up. I'm also pretty certain there are not too many folks who would be willing to volunteer their ride for the demonstration!

There was quite an array of vendors, some indoors and others out.

Outdoors were ABATE-AZ, AZ Motorcycle Towing, Discount Biker Supply, Team AZ, Bad MF apparel, ProRider, GWRRA {Gold Wing Road Riders Association}, RideNow PowerSports, AZ Coyotes, Desert Wind HD, Keene Auto Glass, MMA-AZ, Combat Dolls, Lightning Strike Motorcycle Lights, Shriners Int'l, Biker Down, kettle corn, Blades & Shade, and the Clip Man.

Indoor vendors & other booths included Law Tigers, AMSAF, Breyer Law, Encompass Health Rehab Hospital, The Helmet Center, Pure Romance, Six Gun Entertainment, and Young Living Essential Oils. At the Dignity Health booth they had goggles to simulate driving while impaired. The Governor's Office of Highway Safety, along with other information, had a list of [statewide rider training schools](#).

Fifteen people participated in the blood drive, managed Vitalant Blood Services.

Music was provided by The Visitors.

There was a LOT of valuable information available. Sadly, some of it was somewhat disturbing as well. We as riders want to be able to place blame on the drivers for the wrecks that occur. So, learning that more than 40% of motorcycle crashes and fatalities are the fault of the rider was hard to hear. Causes include: Speed too fast for Conditions, Unsafe lane changes, Following too closely, impairment by Alcohol & Drugs {prescribed or otherwise}, and even Left turns... what we traditionally blame on the cagers. These statistics CAN be turned around - with rider education. Mick emphasized, "We're having a lot of conversation on how best to help reduce crashes and fatalities. It's really a tough question." Training classes for beginners as well as continuing education for experienced riders are available statewide.

There were more than 100 raffle prizes to be won, including apparel, gift baskets, gift cards from restaurants & bars, and more. Businesses were very generous in their donations.

During the presentations ceremony, Mick Degn recognized numerous organizations and individuals who have supported the AMSAF mission over the years.

There were 2 big drawings scheduled for the day. The Grand Prize trip to Laughlin was won by David Thomas. That package, which was donated by Law Tigers and The Husband & Wife Law Team, includes a 3-night stay at Laughlin River Run, concert tickets, plus \$1000 cash. Nice!

The criteria for the 2nd drawing unfortunately was not fulfilled. It seemed like a simple incentive... If 500 people pre-registered for the event [for FREE] then there would be a drawing for a \$500 cash prize. With attendances at 1000+ in years past, this seemed like an easy goal to achieve; but it fell short. It was disheartening to see the reduction in attendance that we observed. As Mick noted, "Safety is hard to sell." It's been said before ... rider safety & all that goes with it can be pretty dry stuff. It's hard to make a safety-themed event 'sexy', attractive, and fun. That being said, it is being observed, by us and others, that

attendance overall is dropping at numerous events... not just at this one.

As they do after each event, these AMSAF and Riding For the Long Haul VOLUNTEERS take what they learn and do what they can to adjust and improve the delivery of their safety messages regarding crash prevention and the importance of injury reduction, new rider training, AND continuing education for more experienced riders.

In following up with Mick afterwards, he sent along this message ... "Our goal is to promote motorcycle safety and awareness and help reduce crashes and fatalities and anytime we can put on an event to help in this area it's worth all the time and effort put into it. We've done this event for 5 years... This year we had Channels 3, 5, 10 and 15 there for coverage on TV." He added, "This event couldn't be done without the Community and our Riding for the Long Haul Committee which is made up of: Howard Gelman, Merlo Pile, Terry Cooper, Steve Hauck, Rosi Khazoom, Mick Degn, and Ari Levenbaum."

When asked if there were event supporters & donors he'd like to thank he replied, "Most definitely; starting with our Title Sponsors - Dignity Health-Chandler Regional Hospital, Arizona Trauma Association, Governor's Office of Highway Safety, and Law Tigers. These folks really stepped up as Sponsors and Partners to help promote motorcycle safety. In addition, Ride Now, Indian Motorcycle, Team Arizona, Breyer Law, Nash Motorsports, and Thomas Baldrick, {owner of video production company 'AZ Strong'} who helped us put together our Title Sponsor video."

AMSAF Scholarships are amazing opportunities to new riders ~ giving them the best possible start to their motorcycling lives. The classes give them a foundation of safe riding skills that they will build on through the years and across the miles.

Since the beginning, AMSAF has provided more than 3500 rider training scholarships to beginning and basic-level riders. AMSAF is continuously seeking grants & donations to help provide more scholarships to our riding community. They hope to get another grant in June or July for more scholarships. Follow the AMSAF Facebook page <https://www.facebook.com/AMSAF.ORG/> for an announcement when it is time to apply.

Donations are tax deductible. Volunteers are also appreciated. Find out more at <https://www.amsaf.org/>

Betsy & Bruce