



Friends of the Kids is a grass-roots group of big-hearted bikers that found a cause they could dedicate themselves to and make a real difference. The focus of their attention isn't big, splashy, or mainstream. It's a humble home with a righteous mission. Friends of the Kids supports the White Mountain Apache Tribe Children's Shelter in Whiteriver, AZ. The Shelter is run by the Apache Behavioral Health Services.

My thanks to Gloria & Mike Kyzer for sharing their story with us & our readers.

Back in 2008 there was a group of riders who became aware of the needs of the Shelter. Donations began primarily with school supplies. Since then, these Friends of the Kids {FOTK} steadily became more organized, including becoming an IRS 501(c)(3) and incorporating as an AZ not-for-profit. Their most-recent accomplishment is becoming certified as an Arizona QCO (Qualified Charitable Organization) per the AZ Dept of Revenue. That means if you make a cash donation to FOTK, you can claim a tax credit on your AZ Personal Income Tax return. Cool!

All the fundraising they do through the year goes toward their annual Friends of the Kids Ride. They load up school supplies, household necessities, groceries, baby needs, & more. This time it was some \$2500 worth. Riders roll in to Payson from East Mesa, Mayer {GCHD}, and Flagstaff; meeting for breakfast before making the final trek together to Whiteriver. This year's delivery took place on Friday June 21st. About 35 riders and passengers plus a few folks in cages escorted the truck & trailer.

Each year, in addition to the types of donations listed above, the FOTK team undertakes special projects on behalf of the Shelter... Over the years they have supplied a new washer & dryer for the home, new beds & mattresses, painted the house,

brought in a landscaper for major yard cleanup, repaired the roof, & the list continues. Their efforts are very inspiring.

Congratulations go to FOTK on completing their goal of building a playground! We learned that, "Over the past 2 years we raised about \$15k and then got matching funds and donated labor to build an ~\$30k playground at the Shelter this year. The {June 21} event at the shelter included a dedication of that playground. They have a swing-set, slide, half moon climber, and merry-go-round, all on an Engineered Wood Fiber (EWF) safety bedding." From their FB page, "Thanks to the generous support of people like you, Apache Behavioral Health Services, Grand Canyon HOG, the Shakopee Mdewakanton Sioux Community, HOGZ United Charities, and many others, the kids now have a place to play in their backyard all year long."

In June, there were 16 kids staying at the Shelter. That's its maximum capacity. The Shelter stays at or nearly full most of the year. The kids at the shelter range in age from infant thru 12 years. Apache Behavioral Health Services also coordinates care for minors above 13 years.

After delivering their donations, the group continued on to Hon-Dah Casino in Pinetop-Lakeside for the annual White Mountain Bike Rally. Once they got there, in addition to having all kinds of fun, their 2020 fundraising efforts immediately got under way. Friends Of The Kids raised almost \$1,100 to kick off next year's campaign! Outstanding!

Supporters of FOTK include Superstition Harley-Davidson, Grand Canyon HOG, and HOGZ United Charities. Plus, individuals from all walks of life step up with donations large & small.

Cash is used to fulfill needs on the Shelter's 'Wish List'. Creative items such as quilts and other artwork have been raffled; as have HD-branded goods... in-

cluding a bicycle and a leather jacket. FOTK can receive donations via their website, <https://www.az-fotk.org/>. FOTK is registered as 'Friends of the Kids Corp.' with AmazonSmiles. With each purchase you make at [Smile.Amazon.com](https://www.amazon.com), FOTK receives a donation. Plus, FOTK sets up support booths at events around the Valley. Follow their Facebook page {<https://www.facebook.com/AZFOTK/>} to learn about other fundraising events, such as their annual Garage Sale.

Friends of the Kids sent along this message, "We really want to thank all the Biker (and non-Biker) folks who donated a little, or a lot, at all our events throughout the year. Plus the Shakopee Mdewakanton Sioux Community for their \$2,500 grant towards the playground, and very special recognition to the Apache Behavioral Health Services folks who stepped up with matching funds and donated labor for the construction of the playground." Followed by, "We want to thank you and *AZ Rider* for helping us get our word out. Additionally, we will be having fundraising events at Superstition HD {Apache Junction} on Sept 7 at their Patriot Day event, and then for 8 weeks at Barry Caraway's Cyclerides.com Tempe Bike Nights at Tempe Marketplace on Wednesday nights starting Sept 11. Come out for some fun and great entertainment, and support a great cause."

If you are familiar with Friends of the Kids already, then you already know what an amazing organization this is. If you haven't met them yet, they'd love for you to stop by their booth & learn more. If you are part of an organization that is looking for a charitable cause to 'adopt', FOTK would be worthy of your consideration.

Congratulations on another successful year!

Betsy