# **Cycle Connections**

## **Online Motorcycle Magazine**

# **Riding for Fallen KC Firefighters – Lee’s Summit, Missouri**

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On October 25, 2015 a group of fewer than 10 friends with heavy hearts in Lee’s Summit, orchestrated the Fallen Heroes ride to help raise money for the families of Larry Leggio and John Mesh. Many media outlets have reported that we were blessed with over 1,200 riders that day raising in excess of thirty-five thousand dollars. Unfortunately, what most are unaware of is HOW it all came together in merely six days. With none of us having a direct connection to the Fire Department or the families we relied on the miracles that took place and the immeasurable amount of energy and momentum that was present.

Now I’m a seasoned event planner. I’ve chaired large bar-b-que competitions along with logistically managing sizable bridal shows. What I’d never been a part of was an event of this magnitude with such a short deadline. On the Monday prior we decided to launch the flyer on social media and made a Facebook Event. We began spreading the word via Facebook, riding groups, posters, and text. What we had hoped to accomplish with these efforts were 100 riders. By Wednesday according to our Facebook Event Page we had 386 attending and 2.3k had been invited. This is when reality set in and we began to envision the gravity of what was about to happen. That Wednesday night we had the one and ONLY meeting with the core group of friends who committed to putting this together in an effort to truly honor the sacrifice of these brave men.

It was this meeting where jobs were assigned and the significance of each of our individual networks began to play into the success. At this juncture, is also when the fund raising efforts began. With just four short days our small army raised raffle and auction items valued at over 10 thousand dollars. Quickly we were coordinating efforts regarding who had connections to tables, escorts, sound, credit cards, media, t-shirts, toilets, entertainment, insurance, permits, etc. It’s important to note that the basic necessities to host this event were provided through the generosity of various people and businesses.

What the 1200 riders were never aware of is how much of the ride came together by the grace of God and at the very last minute. For example, the ability to take credit card purchases was secured on Saturday at 11p.m. In addition, the full escort service wasn’t confirmed until late Saturday afternoon, which allowed us to have the 3 mile uninterrupted procession to the Fire Fighter Memorial in Penn Valley Park. Furthermore, volunteers were processing donation items for the raffle and auction up to 2 a.m. the morning of the ride.

Just two days prior it occurred to us that we were about to host over a thousand guests and we were limited to just two toilets. Many of you may not be aware of the permit that is required to have additional portable facilities on property. 4p.m. on a Friday afternoon is not the best time to make this revelation, again our community stepped up.

As the event drew closer, with only 24 hours left, we started soliciting for people willing to assist with the event. Just after sunrise, in excess of 70 volunteers descended upon the parking lot of “The Bar” in Lee’s Summit eager to help.

As with any ride like this emotions are very high. You can imagine the impact that was made when just 15 minutes to kickstands up, we were approached by a man requesting to play taps on his bugle. As we paused for that performance, it was silent and there wasn’t a dry eye in the parking lot.

There are few times in a person’s life that you realize what you are doing is making a big difference. On October 25, 2015 each of us came from different walks of life and backgrounds. But with the hearts of the volunteers, the 1200 plus riders, the support of businesses all with the focus on one mission, we made a miracle happen.

***Front (L-R): Kelly Springer, Sheri Miller, Mel Foster Middle (L-R): Sonja Griffith, Cheryl Sperry, Pam Fedrick Back (L-R): Doug Earnshaw, Jeff Franzeskos***