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Ride To Provide keeps evolving



At the starting point for the Ride To Provide -- the campus of the Levy Association for Retarded Citizens (LARC) -- some of the many people who helped it happen this year on Saturday (Oct. 28) are (from left) Levy County Sheriff's Office (LCSO) Citizen On Patrol (COP) Member Elihu Ross, LCSO Sgt. Max Long and LARC Program Coordinator Rosa Bowers. Among the other LARC staff members helping at the starting line was Diani Hammond, who helped riders register. Sgt. Long is among the leaders in the LCSO Community Relations Division. On Saturday, there were six deputies and 10 members of the LCSO COP, Sgt. Long said, as they were at the LARC event, the events in Inglis, the Drug Take Back Program in conjunction with the United States Drug Enforcement Administration, and the LCSO and COP members were helping the Chiefland Police Department (CPD) with its final night of the Haunted House in Chiefland. The CPD is a fundraiser for needy children that this municipal law enforcement agency helps at Christmas.

Story and Photos

By Jeff M. Hardison © Oct. 29, 2017 at 4:27 p.m.

TRI-COUNTY AREA – The 13th Annual Ride To Provide, a fundraiser to benefit the Levy County Association for Retarded Citizens, continues to evolve.

Sean Mullins, now a retired lieutenant from the Levy County Sheriff's Office and an artist who has moved out of Florida, started the event to help LARC. Many members of the Mullins family were instrument in years past as well.

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Frank Nicholson, 83, of Chiefland stands beside his 2012 Harley Davidson Switchback (Little Road King). He has two more Harleys in the garage and he rides motorcycles all of the time. Nicholson has been riding motorcycle since 1949. His first bike was a 1946 Harley and he paid \$350 for it in 1949. Nicholson retired as a truck driver in 1989 after being in the Teamsters for 36 years. He was one of the first two riders to arrive at the LARC Campus for the Ride To Provide this year.



Matt Schmidt, 31, of Williston stands beside a 2016 Kawasaki Ninja 636. He borrowed this motorcycle from his friend Danny Merryman to ride in the event this year. Schmidt was one of the first five riders to arrive for the event this year.

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Four COP vehicles, one marked LSCO cruiser and one marked HardisonInk.com news Jeep are lined up before going elsewhere before the start of the 13th Annual Ride To Provide.



Levy County Commissioner Mike Joyner and LARC Executive Director Betty Walker are seen near one of the areas where food is prepared or served. There were many behind-the-scenes people again this year, including Levy County Commission Chairman John Meeks who was among the hotdog cooks.

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Levy County Commissioner Lilly Rooks, always an ardent support of LARC, stands next to the decorative board thanking donors.



A memorial area to honor Thelma McCain is seen at the landing point. McCain, 76, of Cedar Key died on March 5. She was on the LARC Board of Directors for many years. She also served as a trustee on the Central Florida Electric Cooperative board for many years, as well as being on the board of the Cedar Key Water and Sewer Association and as a member of the Cedar Key Lions and Lioness Club.

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Last year, AmVets Post 42 of Chiefland accepted the responsibility to make it happen and that brought in donations of \$7,420 or so.

This year, LARC Executive Director Betty Walker said, the Chiefland Rotarians were the main leaders to make it happen and the club donated \$1,000 too.

Other donors included The Print Shop of Chiefland, First United Methodist Church of Chiefland, a dairy, a bank, an air-conditioning company and individuals.

Another change this year was the finish line for the 60-mile law enforcement escorted ride. This year, the riders enjoyed time with their families and friends at the property on the northwest corner of the Waccassasa River and U.S. Highway 19, south of Otter Creek and north of Gulf Hammock.

Not only was there great food, but a bounce house, a mechanical bucking bull, a zip line and other fun activities were enjoyed by many people.