

THE GREAT SOUTHWEST SCOOTER FIESTA

By Glen Galatan
Photos by Randall Bohl
www.randallbohl.com

Dogs, cats, Reno 911 and scooters? A strange mix, but all for a good cause. The first ever "Great Southwest Scooter Fiesta," drawing over 2500 people from the general public and over 120 scooters, turned out to be the largest gathering of scooters ever in Arizona. The event took place at Joe's Farm Grill, Gilbert, a mecca to local scooterists. The rally was hosted by the Scooter Club of Metro Phoenix, one of the top 5 "Meet Up" scooter clubs in North America, with membership now over 200 and growing. Attendees drove their scooters to the event from as far away as Fresno CA, Santa Fe NM and of course all over the state of Arizona.



Scooting has hit Arizona in a big way. The combination of perfect riding weather, gas prices on the rise and the affordability of the little critters has more Arizona scooter sales over the last two years. The club, with only 10 members just a year ago, wanted its first rally to be more than just a few scoots, a keg of beer and camping.

What it turned into was a huge fundraising event for Maricopa County Animal Care and Control, with over 14 vendor booths ranging from TEAM AZ Motorcycle safety instruction, to the ASU Art Museum with children's activities, to "Ride Now" girls in hot pants doing a scooter wash.

Special guest for the event was Carlos Alazraqui, star of the hit TV show *Reno 911* and voice of the Taco Bell chihuahua. Carlos is a huge scooter enthusiast and dog lover—the perfect host for the event. Music was crafted by Surfside IV. A raffle was held with grand prizes including a Piazio Fly scooter from GoAZ Motorcycle, a Genuine Buddy scooter from Scooter Invasion, along with a race day at the Bob Bondurant School of High Performance Driving—and you may have thought scooter people weren't cool? There was even an electric bike donated by Urban Commuter of Tempe.

But what's a rally without a ride? The event, which actually lasted the whole weekend of October 16-18, 2009, featured rides to Saguaro Lake and South Mountain. 60 to 80 participants scooted the main ride without one nick, scratch or fall—now that's hard core. It totaled close to 200 miles over the weekend.

Many people don't know that scooters have gotten more reliable, bigger and faster. The fastest-growing segment, 150-250cc, can do between 55-65 mph. And 250cc+ scooters can be taken on the highways. Scoots over 500cc are capable of speeds in excess of 100 mph. Those of you in motorcycle clubs, if you have not seen them already, get ready because you *will* be seeing scoots on rides with you soon.

The event helped organize adoption for over 14 animals to good homes and raised thousands of dollars for MCACC, one of their biggest one-day adoptions ever. But just as important was the exposure the Arizona scooter community got from the event—helping to grow riders, helping the environment, raising awareness of "cages" and of sharing the road with the scooterist.

Like to learn more? Visit the club online at www.meetup.com/phoenix-scooter-club for more information or to sign up for your own free membership. ■

Glen Galatan is President of The Scooter Club of Metro Phoenix and Fatcatscooter.com

