



HONOR OUR TROOPS RIDE



After an exhilarating weekend of racing at the Derby Track, the 5th Annual Honor Our Troops Military Appreciation Ride was finally here. Monday morning at 08:00 hours, it was time to turn in the forms, get a helmet and make sure everyone had the proper gear for a cold day on the trail. Col. Don Hamilton welcomed 64 active duty troops and family members to a day of fun on the spectacular trails north of Eagle River. After some necessary instructions, it was outside with their new



The sun was shining and air was crisp and cool, which made the trails spectacular.

caps for the group photo, then back inside to bundle up for the trail. With half of the troops returning this year with their own sleds, it was necessary to split into four riding groups, ranging from beginners to experienced.

As we hit the trails, the temps were hovering around the zero mark and were not



The fireplace at Holiday Lodge was a great place to warm the toes.

expected to rise much higher during the day. The groups took off north on Trail #17 in route to the Gateway Lodge in Land 'O Lakes for lunch. The trails were groomed to perfection, as usual, with a dusting of fresh snow to top them off. After a couple trailside stops to make certain everyone was staying warm, we arrived

at Holiday Lodge on North Twin Lake near Phelps for hot chocolate and goodies. After a much needed warm up, they experienced the thrill of dashing across a frozen lake with the wind nipping at any open skin. After crossing the lake we would pick up Trail #12 for some beautiful woods riding up to Trail #6 and on into the Gateway Lodge for a burger and brat lunch with all the trimmings. Yum!

After lunch we continued through the forest on Trail #6, then turned south on Trail #13 continuing through some of



A huge Thank You to all the donors that helped to make this event possible. Without you, we would be unable to thank the troops and their families for their dedication and service to our country.

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- Design Solutions – caps
- Eagle River Derby Track – race entry, banquet
- Gateway Lodge – lunch stop
- Holiday Lodge – warm up stop/refreshments
- Ken's Sports – silent auction items
- Trackside Sales – sleds
- White Birch Printing – group photos for participants

If you or your organization would like to donate to this outstanding event to help bring a day of snowmobiling enjoyment to our service men and women, please mail your donation made payable to "2015 Military Appreciation Ride" to: Donald J. Hamilton, Col, WI ANG, c/o 115th Maintenance Group, 3110 Mitchell Street/Truax Field, Madison, WI 53704. For additional information, e-mail military.ride@gmail.com.



Burgers and Brats at the Gateway Lodge, truly a Northwoods tradition.

the state's most pristine frozen country. As we drove over the streams on the tiny bridges and past the tall pines, my thoughts turned to the experience of snowmobiling. It truly is the only way to take in the true beauty of winter in the northland. As experienced snowmobilers, we often take it for granted until we see it through the eyes of someone that has never ridden a snowmobile.



Crossing the Wisconsin River near Bauer's Dam.

Soon we were pulling into Bauer's Dam for a brief warm up and hot chocolate or soda. A few miles down the trail, we paused for photos of the riders crossing the Wisconsin River, and received a brief history lesson from our guide, Russ Davis. As the sun was setting, we returned to the Derby Track for the opportunity to take a couple laps on the extremely icy track. It's a wonder how those racers stay on the track at those speeds!



The Rebolz family were able to enjoy a day on the snow together.

The day was topped off with Steve Decker's famous spaghetti with all the trimmings. After dinner, it was time for evaluating the best oops of the day. After many stories and extensive discussion, the infamous toilet seat went to Col. Don Hamilton for a broken sled that his son was riding, although there were many other deserving runners up.



Guide Russ Davis awards Col. Hamilton with his toilet seat award. **WSN**

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