

LCPL J. Kyle Price Memorial Ride reaches 20-year milestone

Marine Vets MC to take over leadership of ride in future

BY TRAVIS MORSE
TMORSE@MORNINGSENTINEL.COM

MOUNT VERNON — What began as a way to cope with grief and loss has transformed over the years into a powerful celebration of life and a way to honor our nation's heroes.

The Lance Cpl. J. Kyle Price Memorial Ride returned for its 20th year on Saturday, April 25, drawing a crowd of patriotic local residents to Mount Vernon Outland Airport. It was a special year for the ride, not just because

of the 20-year milestone but because the event coincided with a visit from the Global War on Terror Wall of Remembrance.

"When we started this ride years ago, it was in the throes of grief, of loss, and ... that was the birth of this," said Rachel Welliver, Kyle Price's sister. "But what the lifetime of this has given us is 20 years of life, of so much joy and connection and faces that we may have never even known had this experience not happened."

The ride is held annually in memory of J. Kyle Price, a 19-year-old Marine originally from Woodlawn who was killed in Iraq on Jan. 13, 2006. In addition to his military service, Price also gave back to his community as a member of the Boy Scouts, the Young Marines, and the Mount Vernon soccer team.

Not only does the ride honor Price's legacy of service, but it also raises money for the foundation created in his honor. The Lance Cpl. J. Kyle Price Memorial Foundation provides several scholarships to Woodlawn High School students, and also supports various military organizations like the Disabled American Veterans (DAV), HOOAH Deer Hunt for Heroes, and others.

"I am so grateful to see all of you here today," said Welliver, who was one of the speakers at the ride's opening ceremony Saturday. "Twenty years of celebrating, leaning on one another, sharing in our grief, and sharing in our joy."

She also added, referencing

SEE KYLE PRICE/PAGE A6



Sentinel Photo/TRAVIS MORSE

A SPECIAL DAY — The 20th annual Lance Cpl. J. Kyle Price Memorial Ride was held on Saturday, April 25, starting at Mount Vernon Outland Airport. During the opening ceremony, event organizers John Hunsell and Cheryl Price-Hunsell invited members of the Marine Vets Motorcycle Club onto the stage. In the coming years, the club will take over leadership of the annual ride.

the War on Terror Wall in the background, "We're so, so, so grateful that all of you have chosen to spend this day with us. And not just celebrate my brother, but celebrate the lives and the names that are on this wall, the lives and the names that aren't on this wall, that served our nation and died. And those of you that continue to serve, whether it's serving and getting out and serving in your community, or taking a career of service. That is what this experience is about."

LEADERSHIP TRANSITION

During Saturday's opening ceremony, event organizer John Hunsell revealed that after this year, the leadership of the annual ride will transition from the Price Foundation to the Marine Vets Motorcycle Club. Hunsell, Kyle Price's step-father, said that the Marine Vets have led the motorcycle ride for 18 of the last 20 years, so it made perfect sense for them to take over the official leadership duties.

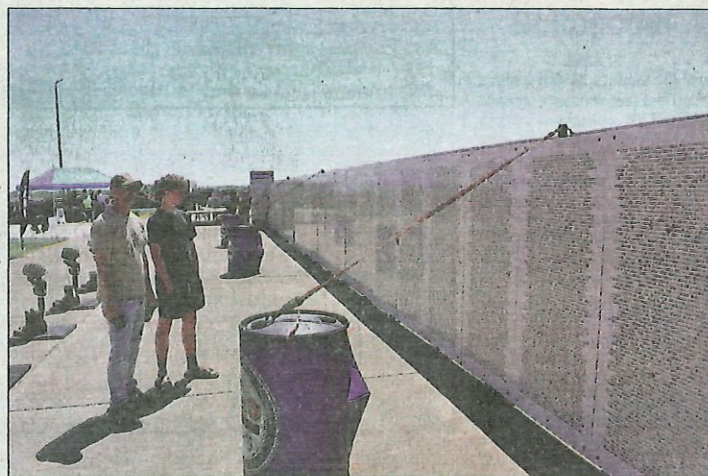
"We are excited and honored to transition the leadership of the ride from the foundation to Marine Vets Motorcycle Club, who have been leading this ride for 18 years," Hunsell said.

Members of the Marine Vets MC said they were honored to take over the ride and that it will continue in the future, with Kyle Price's family remaining involved. The ride, they said, may travel down south sometimes so that additional memorials can be visited, but otherwise it will remain "pretty much the same."



Sentinel Photo/TRAVIS MORSE

THE RIDE BEGINS — A number of motorcycle riders participated in Saturday's 20th annual Lance Cpl. J. Kyle Price Memorial Ride.



Sentinel Photo/TRAVIS MORSE

WAR ON TERROR WALL — This year's Kyle Price Ride coincided with a visit from the Global War on Terror Wall of Remembrance at Mount Vernon Airport. Pictured are Jeff Ward and his son Creedence looking at the wall on Saturday.

WAR ON TERROR WALL

As mentioned previously, this year's ride coincided with the appearance of the Global War on Terror Wall of Remembrance at the airport. It was available for public viewing throughout the day on Friday and Saturday. The wall is a traveling memorial dedicated to honoring veterans and victims of the Global War on Terror. It includes those affected by the Sept. 11, 2001, terrorist attacks.

Among those visiting the wall at Saturday's opening

ceremony was Mount Vernon native Jeff Ward, who was showing the wall to his 12-year-old son Creedence. He also said that viewing the wall is even more poignant now that his older son, Camden, is in the Marines.

"Actually, Creedence's older brother is now in the Marine Corps. He joined last year," Jeff Ward said. "So it hits a little bit different being a parent and coming out and seeing the remembrance wall. It's an emotional and very touching thing, so I'm glad that the airport hosted it today."

MEMORIAL RIDE

This year's Kyle Price Memorial Ride kicked off with registration at noon Saturday at the airport. During that time, there was food from Bonnie Cafe for ride participants, tickets for the 50/50 and raffle, and live music by Dave

Simmons.

Then at 2 p.m. Saturday was the opening ceremony, which featured a number of speakers. Also, during the ceremony, six Mount Vernon Township High School students who are enlisting in the military were recognized.

The ride itself then departed the airport at around 4 p.m. for a trip around Southern Illinois. Many of the riders Saturday had participated before, but some were new to the event, including Brad Lusk, a rider with the Combat Vets Motorcycle Association. He spoke of why he wanted to get involved.

"To support my brothers and sisters that (were) killed and everything over there," Lusk said.

At the end of the day, a closing ceremony and dinner was held Saturday evening at Woodlawn Bar. That was

followed by a raffle drawing and live music featuring Jeff Bradley and Eastwood Frisch.

All in all, it was a wonderful day to honor our nation's veterans, said Robert White, quartermaster of the Mike Flanagan Memorial Post 1376 VFW. He was one of the speakers at the opening ceremony.

"I would say this has been a fantastic event to honor the memory of Kyle after 20 years," White said. "We had the opportunity to honor enlistees from Mount Vernon Township High School, they're going to go into the service and follow in the spirit of service that Kyle had. And the opportunity for veterans to get together and honor one another, along with the Global (War on Terror) Wall. That's incredible. This has been a great veterans event for Mount Vernon."

4/8/20