

A Variety of Shriners Events Raises Millions for Hospitals

Shriners throughout North America donate their valuable free time to hold a variety of special events each year to benefit Shriners Hospitals for Children. These events provide an important contribution by helping to fund the hospitals and raising awareness about the Shriners fraternity and its philanthropy.

In 2007 alone, 522 events held by Shriners temples raised more than \$14.1 million for Shriners Hospitals. While some temples sponsored fundraisers like newspaper crusades, rodeos, dances, and golf and fishing tournaments, others hosted events that are a bit out of the ordinary.

For the past 36 years, the Jackson Hole Shrine Club in Wyoming, which is affiliated with Kalif Shriners, has

held cutter horse races to benefit Shriners Hospitals for Children — Salt Lake City. During the two-day event, held each February, 40 teams compete in a series of races down a snow-covered track. A cutter is similar to a horse-drawn chariot, with two wheels on each side. One person sits on the cutter and directs the two-horse team during the race.

Each year, the races draw between 3,000 to 5,000 spectators and raise between \$17,000 and \$20,000, said Bob Zimmer, president of the Jackson Hole Shrine Club. Funds to benefit the hospital are raised through Calcutta betting, an auction-style type of wagering where people continue to “buy” teams at higher prices throughout the event.

Zimmer, who is also the Teton County sheriff, admits that organizing the cutter races each year can be time consuming, but he believes it is well worth the effort. “When you see one youngster who has had the benefit of receiving care at Shriners Hospitals, it puts it all in perspective.”

In Spokane, Wash., El Katif Shriners race about 10,000 bright-yellow ducks down the Spokane River to raise funds for the Shriners Hospital in their city each year. The ducks aren’t alive, though – they’re plastic.

Members of the community sponsor the ducks by buying raffle tickets. Ticket numbers are affixed to the bottom of each duck. On race day, a crane lifts a container filled with the ducks high above the river and dumps them in all at once. The ducks float about a mile down the river to the official finish gate. Sponsors of the first five ducks to finish the race win prizes.

About 500 people attend the duck race every year, said John Robertson, an El Katif Shriner and coordinator of the 2008 race, which will be held on September 21. Last year’s duck race raised \$33,500. Since 1991, El Katif has donated a little more than \$533,000 in race proceeds to the Shriners Hospital in Spokane and to the temple’s patient transportation fund.

Robertson has volunteered to work on the event since becoming a Shriner five years ago. “It’s rewarding to me as a Shriner, because it shows the community that we are fortunate enough to have a Shriners Hospital in Spokane,” he said.

Thanks to the efforts of Shriners who volunteer to work on events like these, more than 865,000 children each year receive one-of-a-kind medical care – at no charge – at the 22 Shriners Hospitals for Children.

Forty teams participated in the Jackson Hole Shrine Club Cutter Horse Race held in February to benefit the Shriners Hospital in Salt Lake City. (Photo courtesy of Marilyn Paine)



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