

Antelope Valley Press



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49er parade rises from ashes

Event honors community's resilience

By **CLAUDIA LOPEZ**
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LAKE HUGHES — Up from the ashes and reborn like a phoenix was the theme Saturday morning for the 65th annual 49er Parade and Festival, which attracted hundreds of Antelope Valley residents.

The event gained its "Phoenix Rising" theme this year due to the massive May 2013 Powerhouse fire, which charred 30,000 acres and destroyed 53 structures.

The remnants of the fire were still seen Saturday across Elizabeth Lake and Lake Hughes. The still-blackened hills served as a backdrop for the event, some vegetation still fighting through the charred soil.

Event co-chairwoman Peggy Moore said she and resident Tom Joynt helped to coordinate the event, and the idea of "Phoenix Rising" was to show the community that much like the mythical creature, the phoenix, the community was able to rise from the

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RUBY ALVARADO/Valley Press

OUT FRONT — The Painted Turtle members wave at the crowd Saturday morning at the annual 49er Day Parade on Lake Elizabeth Road. The event got its "Phoenix Rising" theme this year due to the massive May 2013 Powerhouse fire, which charred 30,000 acres and destroyed 53 structures.

PARADE: New residents like what they see

From A1

ashes of the Powerhouse fire and get back up again.

Scheduled grand marshals were Robin Kennard, Debi Tallent, Frank Toothaker and Joe Brong, the Volunteers on Patrol members who helped to evacuate hundreds of residents from the advancing flames.

"This is our annual fundraiser so the parade kicks off the 49er Day Festival — it's our big community thing that brings everybody in one spot," Moore said. "It's really good. We all have our own little niches and we don't come together that much, so it's a really good time for everybody to just come together. The camaraderie that comes along is really, really good," she said.

The Rock Inn, she added, is a focal point in the community where a lot of people tend to gather. The parade kicked off the festival the Lakes Community Center, with 27 participants to showcase the theme through Elizabeth Lake Road from Newvale Drive, and ran east past the Rock Inn to the Lakes Community Center at 17520 Elizabeth Lake Road. All floats and parade participants had red, orange and yellow decor on floats and embellished attire.

Community queens waved at spectators, many of them sitting

inside vehicles decked in red, orange and yellow ribbons. Floats made their way through the parade route, many of which had the mythical bird propped up for everyone to see.

One float had a giant bird with large colorful papier-mache wings sitting atop papier-mache flames.

Rosamond resident Evelyn Campbell said she enjoys the parade and was happy to see her granddaughter — 5-year-old Tiny Miss Antelope Valley, Rylee Van Houten — participating.

"We like to see the bands, love the communities, love going to these small towns and seeing all the activities that they put out for the kids," Campbell said. "What we love is how nice all these small-town community people are. We come for the support that they need after the (Powerhouse) fire and seeing how things have grown since the fire," Campbell said.

Lancaster resident Kristan VanHouten, Rylee's mother, said the theme of the parade is true to the community, as its members came together and didn't let the destruction of the fire bring them down.

"I think that it's really important that we all come as a community and rally the Elizabeth Lake community because they've gone through so much devastation.

They've raised their heads high, and they're rising above everything and proving that no matter what as a community, they can stick together and rally and really just thrive," VanHouten said.

Elizabeth Lake residents Adrian and Victoria Corbett said they recently moved from the United Kingdom to Elizabeth Lake because of a job opportunity at Edwards Air Force Base. They said they are happy to see the closeness among people within the community even after the Powerhouse fire.

"It's fun; it's good," Adrian Corbett said about the event. He said what caught his eye in the parade was the Los Angeles County Fire engines and Forestry Service vehicle traveling down the parade route.

"They're pretty cool," Corbett said with a laugh. "We've been here since April — this is due tomorrow," he said with a laugh, pointing at Victoria's pregnant belly.

Victoria Corbett said her newborn child will probably be the youngest member of the Elizabeth Lake community.

Adrian Corbett's parents, Celia and Bob Mainwaring, also attended the parade and said they have flown in from London to see the birth of their grandchild.

They will be staying in Elizabeth Lake for the next two months.



RUBY ALVARADO/Valley Press

VOLUNTEERS HONORED — The grand marshals of the 49er Day Parade wave at the crowd Saturday morning on Lake Elizabeth Road. Robin Kennard, Debi Tallent, Frank Toothaker and Joe Brong are the Volunteers or Patrol members who helped to evacuate hundreds of residents from the advancing flames of last year's Powerhouse fire.

"The thought that they themed it (parade) on the fire is really nice," Bob Mainwaring said adding he had seen online videos of the Powerhouse fire. "It was pretty

immense."

Residents continued to celebrate the one-day event at the Lakes Community Center where they could partake in a variety of games,

listen to live music and enjoy a variety of food.

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