



PRESS RELEASE

Giant weekend of hot cars, hot chili and golf generate big crowds and big bucks for Mesquite Cancer Help Society

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The husband and wife team of Kevin and Tamie Merrill of Idaho Falls, Ida., captured the prestigious Best of Show honors with a beautiful 1940 Ford pickup in the annual Mesquite Motor Mania generating \$3,000 in what proved to be a beneficial weekend in more ways than one.



CONTACTS: Mike Henle, The Idea Company Public Relations, 702-279-3483; Christian Adderson, 888-711-4653, ext. 51.

Married for 26 years, the Merrills made the long trip to Mesquite after reading a magazine article about the 600-car show sponsored by the Mesquite Resort Association. The event presented Jan. 14-16 drew capacity crowds throughout the weekend.

“This is a great bonding tool,” said Mrs. Merrill. “We really enjoy working on the car together, and this is a wonderful ending to a great weekend. We have won several awards with the truck, but this is the most money we have ever won with it.”

Mrs. Merrill gets credit for picking the special blend candy paint color along with selecting the customer interior.

“The car was built by Tom’s Classic Customs,” said Mr. Merrill, a 53 year-old siding contractor who said the couple travels to Mesquite several times each year. “It’s a 700-mile trip, but well worth it.”

Mr. Merrill said the truck has a 383 stroker engine with a 671 blower. “It’s mainly a show car, but we drive it around a little bit,” he said. “We don’t drive it around much, and use it more for a show car.”

“We’ll be back next year, for sure,” added Mr. Merrill. “I thought it was a great show. We have been to several shows, and this one was really nice.”

Mesquite Motor Mania featured more than 260 trophies and an estimated \$15,000 in prize money. Combined with great music, the gathering of classic cars culminated a glorious weekend by packing the CasaBlanca Showroom Sunday afternoon.

In fact, the entire weekend was well worth it considering that other activities included a Golf Fore Life tournament; and the inaugural \$5,000 Smokin’ Big Chili Challenge sanctioned by the International Chili Society on Sunday generating more than \$8,000 for the Mesquite Cancer Help Society.

Mary Ochs, who orchestrated the Golf Fore Life event, had 100 players at the CasaBlanca Golf Club and raised about \$3,000 for the Mesquite Cancer Help Society.

“The tournament was fantastic and a great time was had by all,” said Ochs, who has been with Black Gaming for eight years. “We raised a great amount of money, and that’s always the best thing of all.

“The highlight of the tournament was our best-dressed team which included Ronnie Curtis, an employee of Black Gaming; Neil Leibowitz, a resident of Colorado who travels to Mesquite often; and the husband and wife team of Donna and Wes Murray, Canadians who live part-time in Mesquite,” Ochs said. “They dressed in boas, flashing pink glasses and had pink streaks in their hair, and our judges picked them immediately for having the best costumes of the tournament.”

The chili cook off drew more than 40 teams from several states along with more than \$5,000 for the Mesquite Cancer Help Society. In addition, the people’s choice drew a long list of positive comments from visitors who helped a great cause while tasting some of the best chili on earth.

“It was awesome,” said Charel Kaufman, a native of Rochester, N.Y. who has lived in Mesquite for five years. “Mesquite has so many really exciting things going on all of the time, and it’s so nice to be able to look forward to every weekend here.”

Michele Evans, sales manager for Black Gaming, said the chili cook off far exceeded her expectations.

“I knew it was going to be big, but I didn’t know that it would be so enthusiastic,” she said. “It’s a great family event. Every one of the lines had to be 40 deep all day long.”

“Bob Plager, who competed in the event with his wife, Kathy after traveling to Mesquite from Littleton, Colo., lauded the cookoff.

“It was a great success,” Plager said.

“I think the crowd is huge,” Kathy added. “I took one look at the line and said “Wow!”

Black Gaming Director of Food Operations Bruce Landvik competed in the chili cook off.

“This has been outstanding,” said Landvik, who also won first place in the Mesquite Peoples Choice competition against eight other local residents. “I figured out that I served 1,152 cups of chili. I mean, what goes better than cars, chili and a gorgeous day? I have talked to so many people who have thoroughly enjoyed themselves.”

The final traditional red chili results for the Smokin Big Chili Challenge were led by Bakersfield, California competitors Eileen Beaty won first place money of \$1,500; her husband, Jim, who took second-place money of \$750. Mike Austin of San Bernardino, Calif., finished third to win \$500.

The Green Chili category was won by Jodi Wiseman of Las Vegas, who won \$650; Karen Angotti of Costa Mesa, Calif. won \$100 for second place; and Louis Gonzales of Paint Rock, Tex., was third and took home \$50.

First place in the Salsa category was Dione Cooley of Reno, who won first place money of \$460. Husband Skip took second to win \$100 while Barbara Herrin of Paint Rock, Tex. Took third place money of \$50.

The \$1,000 first place money in Peoples Choice went to Charles Harber of Corona, Calif.

Future special events at the CasaBlanca include the Queen of Hearts Bunco Feb. 5 at the CasaBlanca to benefit Goodie Two Shoes; BransonFest Feb. 7-10; and USA Senior Softball March 21-26.

Further information regarding special events can be found at www.casablancaresort.com.

CAPTIONS:

CAR SHOW WINNER:

Idaho Falls, Idaho., residents Kevin and Tamie Merrill, shown here with their beautiful 1940 Ford pickup, took home Best of Show honors at the recent Mesquite Motor Mania.

MOTOR MANIA 2 AND 4:

Mesquite Motor Mania attracted more than 600 classic vehicles Jan. 14-16.

CHILI:

The Peoples Choice part of the inaugural Smokin' Big Chili Challenge drew a great crowd Sunday while raising an estimated \$8,000 for the Mesquite Cancer Help Society.