'It kinda gives you chills'



PHOTOS BY MONICA KREBER | THE JOU

Above, hundreds of motorcyclists board their bikes in preparation for the start of Monday's Honoring Their Service kickoff motorcade, which started in Easley. Below, Marines are greeted with a round of applause as they march away from their charter bus to board the Jeeps that would caravan through the Upstate.

Cycles lead Marines to Keowee Key



BY MONICA KREBER
THE JOURNAL

SENECA — The sounds of revving engines, cheers and clapping hands filled the 35-plus-mile parade route Monday afternoon as Marines arrived in the Upstate to kick off Honoring Their Service events.

The parade started at 2 p.m. in Easley, with motorcycles, police cars and jeeps roaring past people who came out of their homes and workplaces to wave flags, hold up signs and scream, "Thank you!" Passing cars honked their horns as Marines and motorcyclists waved back.

Bonnie Bachman, whose husband, Jon, is chairman of the event, said the parade is emotional.

"It's nice to see people be enthusiastic and cheering," she said. "It's a chance to meet them and a chance to thank them."

Many of the motorcycles were decked out in red, white and blue to show their American pride.

"I think it's neat to see them all decorated," Bachman said. "It kinda gives you chills."

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MARINES: 'It's for the troops,' Ty said

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Honoring Their Service events kicked off Monday with the motorcycle escort parade, which traveled through Easley, Liberty, Norris, Central, Clemson and Seneca, ending at Keowee Key. The festivities continue today with a Veterans' Appreciation Family Night at 6 p.m. at Gignilliat Field in Seneca. There will be food, live music and fireworks. The Marines arrive at 7 p.m.

Ty and Lori Kelley were first-time motorcyclists in Monday's parade. They were among hundreds of people who participated.

Lori's company, Carolinas Wealth Management, sponsored a Marine this year for the event.

"It's the sacrifices these people make that gives us the freedoms we have today," Lori said. "When they're gone they're heroes, but when they're here they are forgotten, and we need to change that."

Lori said she gets a lot out of knowing her company is helping to sponsor a Marine, and hopes "it will be one of the best weeks of their life."

"I want them to enjoy this week and feel welcomed and honored," she said.

Ty appreciates the number of people who come out to show their support for the parade.

"It's for the troops," he said. "A lot of people gave up work today to be here."

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PHOTOS BY JESSICA NELMS | THE JOURNAL

Above, motorcyclists decked out their bikes in red, white and blue in honor of the Marines they escorted. Left, the public came out of their homes and workplaces to wave flags, hold banners and cheer on the caravan Monday. Far left, Seneca Fire Department firefighters raise the American flag before the start of Monday's parade. Lower left, Marines wave to the crowd from a Jeep as they pass through Seneca.