

Marines get food, fun, support

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PILOTS LAUNCH

U.S. Marine Cpl. Vu Pham and HM3 Beth Olson are two of the 120 HMLAT 303 helicopter training squadron pilots served a homemade lunch Tuesday of barbecued pulled pork and coleslaw hosted by the First Marine Division Association, Colorado River Corvette Club and Tri-State Military Moms at the Laughlin/Bullhead International Airport.

BULLHEAD CITY — U.S. Marine Corps pilots with the HMLAT 303 training out of the Laughlin/Bullhead International Airport came back from flight training Tuesday to find a barbecue lunch, Corvette rides, and a lot of local support.

“We wanted to do something for these troops,” said Jim Robinson, First Marine Division Association president. “It’s a fun thing to come out and see these kids, and show them how much we appreciate what they do.”

A joint effort between the First Marine Division Association, the Colorado River Corvette Club and Tri-State Military Moms, the lunch provided barbecued pulled pork sandwiches, coleslaw, snacks, fresh fruit and drinks.

“It’s awesome to see a community so involved with the military,” said Sgt. Blake Graham. “It feels good to see people who care — we don’t see it too often.”

The visiting pilots are with HMLAT 303, a light attack helicopter training squadron based in Camp Pendleton, Calif. The squadron, which will be training in the area through Friday, selected the Laughlin/Bullhead International Airport for training based on the weather, available facilities and ramp space, said Jeremy Keating, airport director.

“The lunches have been a coordinated effort,” said Beth Richardson, Tri-State Military Moms vice president. “VFW Post 10005 Auxiliary provided a fabulous lunch on Friday — four carloads of food — and today’s lunch was provided by First Marine Division Association and the Colorado River Corvette Club. As soon as we knew the pilots were coming, everything just came together. We all wanted to do something for the troops.”

Jo and Gale Allen, Colorado River Corvette Club president and First Marine Division Association member, brought along a 2014 Premiere Edition Corvette, offering rides to any pilot who wanted one.

“Jim (Robinson) and I are Marines,” Gale Allen said. “We wanted to support our fellow Marines because freedom isn’t free. There are so many veterans in this area — this is a way to say thank you to the new generations for continuing to keep us safe.”

“It was amazing to walk into this today,” said Lance Cpl. Noah Madmon.

Lance Cpl. Amanda Baeza agreed.

“We appreciate everyone doing this,” she said. “It’s so nice having the welcome and homemade food, it is so much better than fast food.”

“The whole time has been like this,” said Sgt. Blake Graham. “There are a lot of very friendly people here. Very friendly.”

The organizers were not surprised by the reaction of the pilots.

“This is such a simple thing,” Gale Allen said. “And it makes such a difference.”

“I’m a Vietnam veteran,” said Jim Robinson. “We didn’t have this. It gives you a good feeling to do something for these kids.”

Beth Richardson said, “We’re so proud of them. We’re a small town, not near any base, but we’re so proud of them. We do it because we know what our passion is — supporting our veterans and our active-duty military.”