



Snow sports provide vets healing spirits



A February blanket of snow offered perfect conditions for over 640 American military veterans and their families to participate in a week-long recreational therapy retreat in Angel Fire.

Hosted by Angel Fire's own National Veterans Wellness and Healing Center, the Military WinterFest 2017 used natural winter recreation opportunities in the Moreno Valley to aid veterans and families, some suffering from Post Traumatic Stress (PTS).

Over 640 veterans and family members were treated to a week of skiing, snowboarding, tubing and snowshoeing. Special events included inter-service fun races and a kid-fest. Ski and snowboard lessons were provided by many local veterans and there was an adaptive program for vets with disabilities. All told, over 35 local volunteers pitched in with everything from clerical assistance to ski and snowboard instruction to serving hot chocolate at the ski area.

The centerpiece for families to connect was a dinner and entertainment on Saturday evening. "Participants in the 2015 and 2016 weekend said that this social gathering was the high point of the weekend," according to a historical summary.

To help fund the dinner, the Wellness and Healing Center approached the Angel Fire Community Foundation for a matching grant. Although the Wellness and Healing Center asked for help with half the cost of the dinner, the Loving Family Memorial Fund Advisors were so pleased with the 2016 retreat they helped fund, they elected to fund the entire 2017 dinner through the Angel Fire Community Foundation. Thus, a matching grant for \$6,000 added to the overall resounding success of WinterFest 2017.



Chuck Howe, president of the Wellness Center Foundation, said that not only is the event a "great value for the vets and their families, it is as well an economic driver for the Moreno Valley and makes citizens feel good."

A special fund drive Donor Dinner Friday evening during WinterFest 2017 grossed over \$52,000. At \$4,000 per couple for a week-long retreat, Howe said that will enable 13 more couples to attend a retreat.

Howe added that the success of the WinterFest has assured its continuance and the 2018 fest has already been scheduled for February 2018. The Loving Family Memorial Fund Advisors and the Angel Fire Community Foundation are pleased to have helped fund and be a part of such a wonderful, healing event.

For more information about the Foundation, go to:

<http://www.angelfirecommunityfoundation.org/>



Photos courtesy Mike Gilcrease