

PHOTOS: Summer Salute Car Show Supports Veterans' Programs

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Story and Photos by Ty O'Neil

Scroll down for a gallery of images from the event.

The fifth annual Summer Salute Car Show at Rancho San Rafael Regional Park was blessed with great weather and some truly amazing examples of classic and modern vehicles. Hosted by Classic Chevys Reno, the event benefitted Honor Flight Nevada and Veterans Guest House. Last year's event raised over \$16,000 for each organization.

While not Hot August Nights in scale, this show featured a great variety of vehicles from military ambulances to Lamborghinis and everything in between.



Awards for the car show. Photo: Ty O'Neil

There was a competitive element to the show, with participants vying for custom-made awards for best engine or best paint job, or for one great vehicle, best in show. The awards combined automotive elements with military symbols.

I spoke with Joel Edwards, the designer and creator of the awards, who showed me his combination of US military small arms ammunition and automotive parts to create the more coveted awards. He also explained that he had around 400 hours into the trophies, all donated time, and that companies would sponsor each award, raising money for Honor Flight Nevada and Veterans Guest House.

This combination of automotive and military was not confined to the awards. Some vehicles featured photos of lost service members or other items of remembrance, like dog tags.

Noreen Leary of Veterans Guest House explained that the Guest House is entirely privately funded and receives no taxpayer money—a testament to the Reno community's support. Fundraisers such as this help support the house operations. The organization has also been fundraising to finance an upcoming expansion, which is expected to be completed by this time next year.

The Veterans Guest House provides not only a place to stay during medical treatment but also offers camaraderie and the guests are strictly veterans or their direct family members. Leary reiterated the Guest House's appreciation and love for the Reno community, thanking them for their support.

Jim Forbus with Honor Flight Nevada told me about their efforts to take veterans to Washington D.C. to visit the memorials built for them. World War II, Korea, and Vietnam veterans, he explained, get an all-expense paid trip to see their memorials, and in the case of many Vietnam soldiers, receive a welcome home that they never received.



Participants of a recent Honor Flight Nevada trip. Photo: Ty O'Neil

Forbus introduced me to Roger Ferguson, a Vietnam veteran who was among the first Marines to go to Vietnam in 1965. He had recently taken an honor flight, in early April of this year, and told me about his experience.

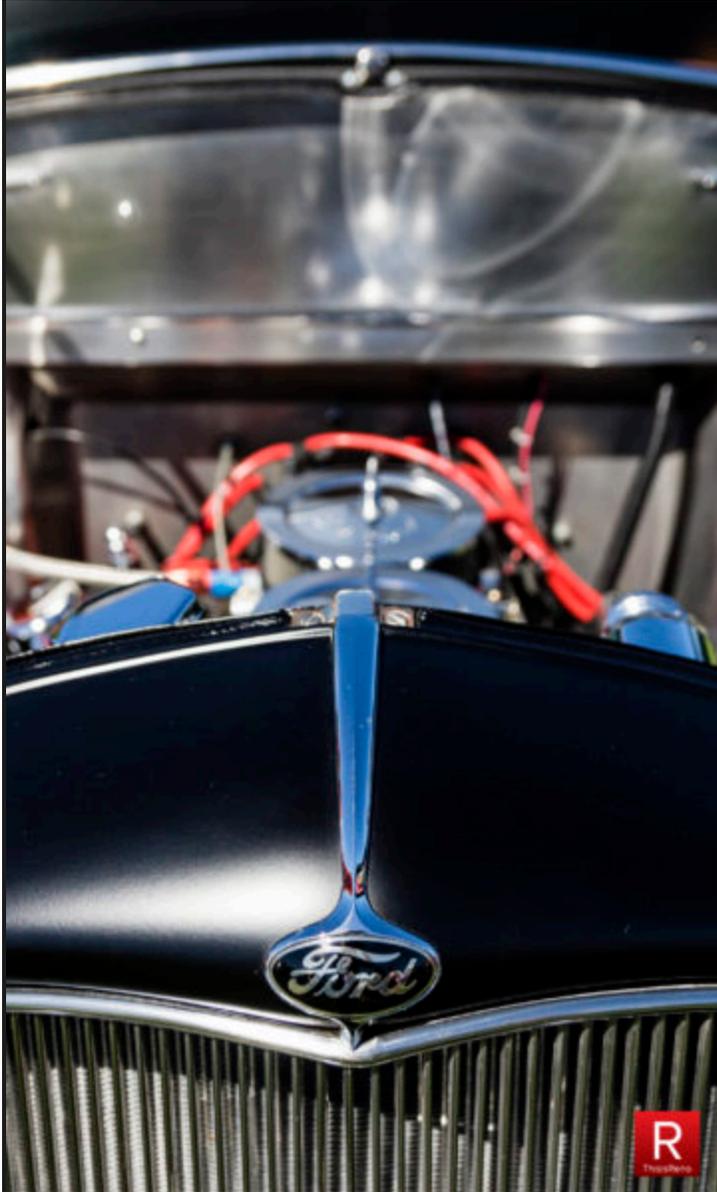
“One of the best things in my life,” he told me. He added that it was a very emotional experience but everyone on the tour could understand what you were going through, as they are also veterans. He and a few other veterans who joined him explained how school children would wave and even hand letters to the veterans. It was clear that Honor Flight Nevada has made a substantial impact on the lives of many of our Reno Veterans.

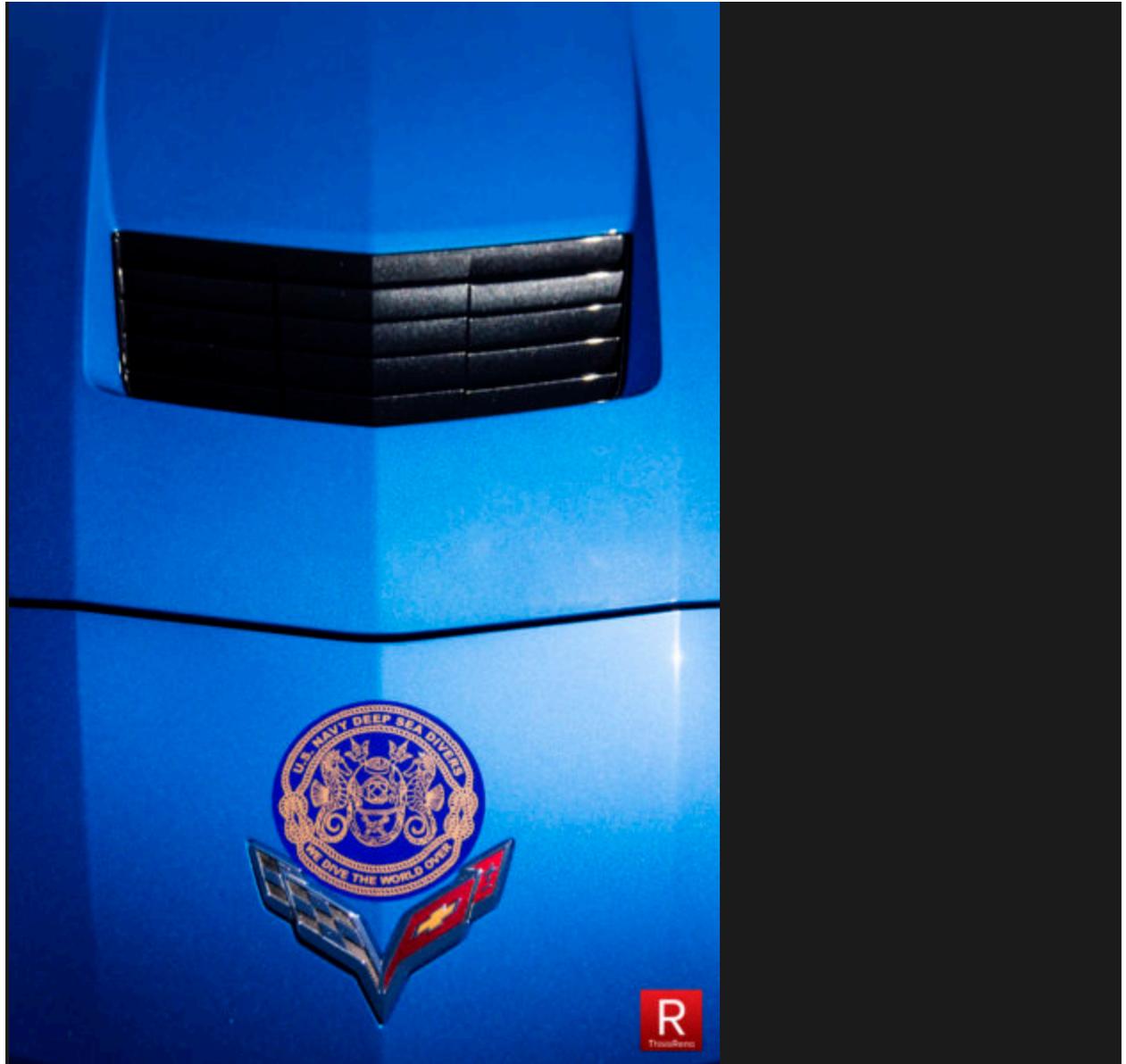
Representatives from the Nevada Veterans Memorial Plaza were also on hand. Jenette Franks and Ashley Meyers from that group told me about efforts to build a memorial plaza near the Sparks Marina. The plaza would feature the names of Nevada service members who have lost their lives dating back to the Civil War. The plaza will be constructed so that every feature carries a meaning for either Nevada or the military. Seventeen trees representing each Nevada county, granite benches for each military branch, no element without meaning.

Lastly, I spoke with Michelle Mello, an organizer with Reno Sparks Homeless Veterans who were at the event collecting food. They provide food to disabled, senior, and homeless veterans. Mello said that they assist around 100 veterans a week and more on occasion. The donations that had been made by noon when we spoke, she estimated, would last them around three weeks.

As a final thought, I'd like to mention that while many people are excited to have a three-day weekend, or to enjoy a sale, this Monday, Memorial Day, is in fact a day to remember this country's lost service members. Please take time to remember the fallen and honor their memory.





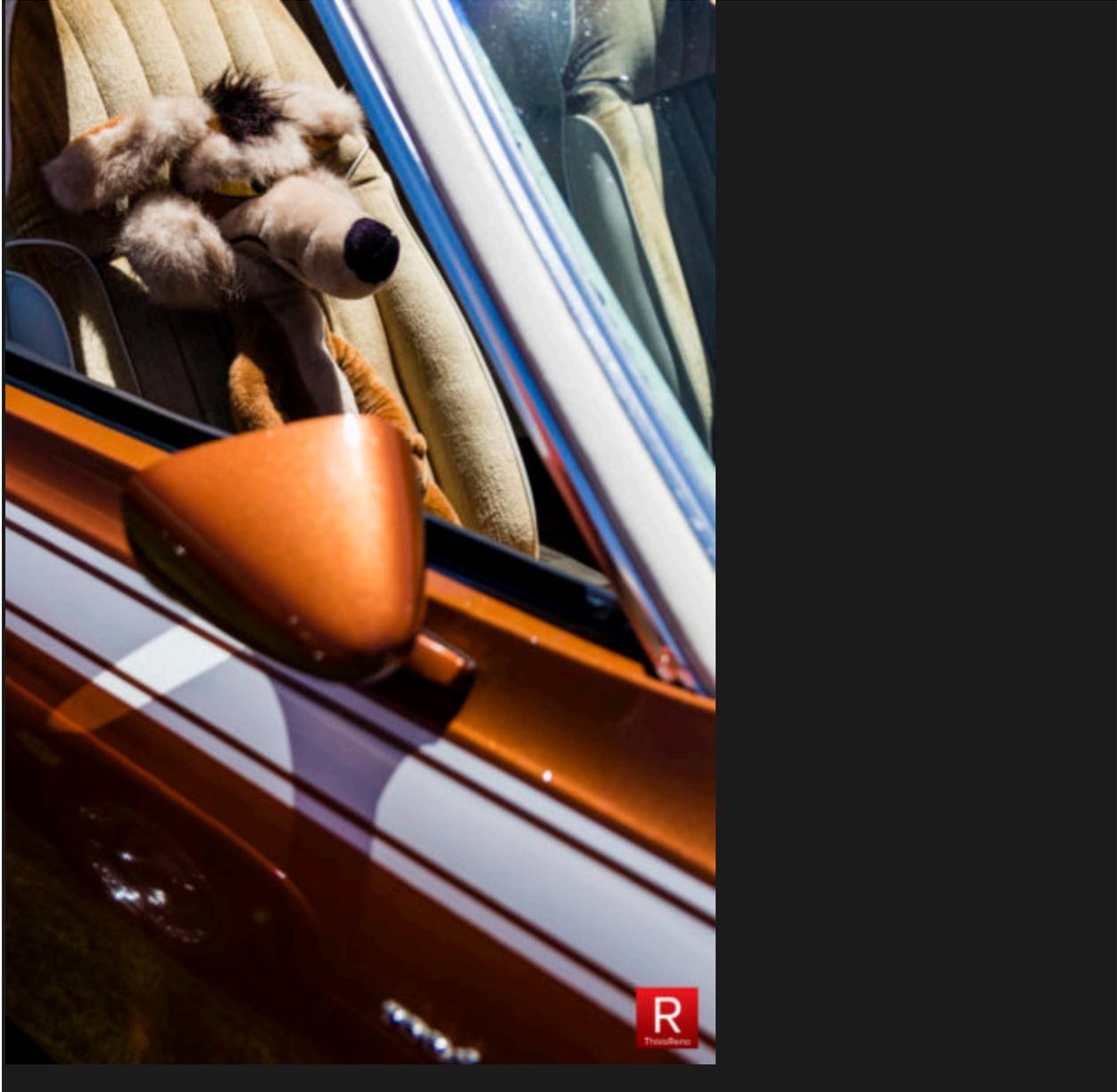












If you would like to know more or to donate to any of these causes please visit their websites:

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

<https://www.veteransguesthouse.org/>

<http://nevadaveteransmemorial.org/>

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