



## THE BLUE RIDGE MUSTANG CLUB OF ASHEVILLE PONY RUN FOR HOSPICE

By Joe Grace, President

**D**uring the week of our 2008 show, gas was high, hurricane Ike was churning in the Gulf of Mexico, and local meteorologists again became our best friends. We expected a record-breaking herd of Mustangs for the Pony Run as our host hotels reported good numbers for reservations. This Pony Run was looking to beat the previous year's record of 330 Mustangs.

Hurricane Ike turned toward Texas. The forecast in Asheville was partly cloudy and temperatures in the mid 80's. Club members were happy, food vendors were ordering extra food, the band and the DJ were picking their tunes, and registration packets were numbered and ready. Just when we thought we had it all figured out—Asheville ran out of gas. Not just one station here and there, or just on the interstate, and not just national brands, every gas station in western North Carolina. How does one even remotely plan on THAT happening two days before a huge regional show? Well, you don't. You just talk to AAA, the Chamber of Commerce, and anyone else who would listen.

My cellphone did not stop ringing the day and well into the night before the event. The question, "Is there any gas?"

All we could say was some stations were getting some and others not. Hotel rooms were being cancelled and we were looking at a very small turnout. Some club members and I even discussed cancelling the entire Pony Run on Friday morning prior to the event. When the Port-A-John dude called to know about placement at the show site, we figured if Port-A-Johns were on site we had to have the event.



On the morning of the Pony Run, we woke to dense fog. The forecast was for clearing by 10am. As club members gathered for registration, we wondered what the morning would bring. With 200 club members, at least 100 were going to be in the run. Even at 100 Mustangs, we knew that it would be a decent Pony

Run on the Blue Ridge Parkway. Well, I underestimated the Mustang crowd as in the distance, through the thick fog, the unmistakable growl of a Mustang's exhaust could be heard. The radio crackled with the voice of a club member who was directing the Mustangs into the staging area, "We got Mustangs coming!" he shouted! Lo and behold they did—Mustang after Mustang came down the hill to the staging area! Familiar faces, new faces, looking-for-gas faces, happy-to-be-here faces. By the end of registration, we had 287 Mustangs ready to go. But, why not add a new fly in the ointment? The expected police escorts were having problems with coverage along our route due to people fighting and traffic snarls at stations that actually had some gas. We called Sgt. Faye Harper of the Asheville Police Department. She and her five-man team came to the rescue. Within 30 minutes she made some calls and cashed in a number of favors to make sure that we had the proper coverage at all the major intersections with traffic lights.

Never have I ever seen so many police cars on one drive as we did for this Pony Run. I counted 29 police cars from Asheville City Police, Buncombe County Sheriff's Dept., NC Highway Patrol, Transylvania County Police, Brevard City Police, Haywood County Sheriff's Dept. and the Park Rangers. Every light was covered, traffic was stopped for



a 30-mile drive to the Pisgah Forest Highway (which eventually takes us to the Blue Ridge Parkway). Our 62-mile round trip drive through the scenic mountains of Western North Carolina was protected by the best of the best. Without those officers, the Pony Run would not have been as safe and wonderful. To give you all a chuckle, the previous year, we had so many (330) Mustangs on the Parkway that the traffic was backed up for miles.

Luckily, we offered a 'pit stop' at the Cradle of Forestry Discover Center. About 150 Mustangs pulled into their parking lot to wait while the first group made their way up the mountain and past Looking Glass Falls. Imagine the surprise of the people who were having Tea With the Llamas' as 150 Mustangs roared into the parking lot. Tea With the Llamas is a yearly event for kids and families to go on a hike with the llamas as a guide teaches them about hiking and llamas, and they all have lunch and tea. Within five minutes after we parked and people bolted to the restrooms, the llama parade went right by the herd of Mustangs. Not sure who took more pictures—the llama crowd of our Mustangs or the Mustang crowd of the llamas. I'm proud to say that no llamas or Mustangs were hurt or injured during the course of this Pony Run!

After the Run, 287 Mustangs returned safely to the show site and joined the 23 that did not go on the run, totaling 310 Mustangs for this year. Not bad for a weekend without gas! The Blue Ridge Mustang Club of Asheville would like to thank all those who braved the gas shortage and joined us for the Pony Run. We had people from 113 cities and towns and from 8 states join us and we thank each and every one of them for making our 3rd Annual Mustangs for Hospice Pony Run a major success. Our club was able to present a check to Hospice for \$16,000.

It is safe to say that the Blue Ridge Mustang Club of Asheville hosts the largest one-day Pony Run in the country. On September 26-27, 2009, we are hosting our first-ever two-day Mustang show with modified MCA judging and an all-day Mustang show on Saturday, and the Pony Run on Sunday.

Look for an ad with special hotel rates and additional information in the July and August issues of *Mustang Times*. In the meantime, visit our website at [www.brmcoa.org](http://www.brmcoa.org); call 828.667.9213; or email us at [ponyrun2009@yahoo.com](mailto:ponyrun2009@yahoo.com) for information.

Our club will be hosting an MCA National event at the Biltmore Estate on Labor Day weekend 2010. Consider coming to Asheville and see how we do things up here in the mountains!