



Motorcyclists invited to help former rider

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Rudy Luz loves life, this despite a motorcycle accident seven years ago that has left him paralyzed.

At 77, Luz credits hard work and a positive attitude toward life for helping him progress to where he now lives alone in his Ahwatukee house, aided by caregivers in the morning and evening.

A motorcycle benefit ride is planned on Cinco de Mayo to help Luz retrofit his home. Any extra money will be donated to help others with spinal-cord injuries.

"I spent most of my life doing what I wanted," said Luz as he sat soaking up the sun under one of his favorite trees in the Safeway parking lot at Chandler Boulevard and 40th Street.

"I flew my own plane, I rode my Harley, I had a full life. But some of these children with disabilities will never experience what I have. I know how much this can help them."

Luz can be seen regularly making a half-mile trip from his home to the Safeway complex in a yellow and black motorized wheelchair.

He says people always stop to chat or wave at him.

"I've met a lot of nice people here, and now I see friends whenever I come," Luz said.

Even Luz's wheelchair is a reflection of the affection locals have for him. Modifications to his steering column, a custom canopy to keep the summer sun off his skin, a cup holder and a lap tray on which he keeps his cellphone, glasses and incidentals are all gifts from his friends at Plaza Hardware.

Luz began riding Harley-Davidson motorcycles in Massachusetts when he was 15. Over the years, while he and his wife raised six children and gave a home to more than 250 foster children, he worked in real estate and later as a home inspector.

He and Dorothy, his childhood sweetheart and wife, moved to Ahwatukee in 1990. Dorothy died one year before his 1997 retirement.

Luz was injured the day before Thanksgiving 2000. His bike went down after hitting a soft patch of dirt on Hunt Highway. He awoke Thanksgiving morning and realized he was paralyzed.

"Right now everything is pretty much jury-rigged," Dawn Cater of Maricopa said about her father's house. "We could use some plumbers, carpenters and construction people to help make his house easier for him to get around in."

