

# Bikers help out families

By SILVIO J. PANTA, Staff Writer

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JOSELITO VILLERO PHOTO  
Top Hatters Motorcycle Club officers meet at the Airport Inn in Imperial before delivering food to needy families in Calipatria and Niland on Friday. From left are Armando Lopez, club president; Tommy Neri, vice president; John Gerving, secretary, and Raymond Alnas, state president.

**IMPERIAL —** Bucking the notion that bikers are societal misfits, nearly 50 members of the Top Hatters Motorcycle Club joined forces Friday to deliver food to needy families in Calipatria and Niland.

Rewing up their Harley Davidson choppers in the parking lot of the Airport Inn off Highway 86, members of the Imperial Valley chapter of the 62-year-old club, joined by club members from throughout the state, trekked near the City Hall building in Calipatria, where they took boxes of food worth more than \$2,000 to underprivileged families.

After they were done there the Top Hatters made their way to Niland, where they also delivered food, said Armando Lopez, Imperial Valley chapter president. Club members raised money to purchase the food from the Imperial Valley Food Bank.

Lopez, a 35-year employee of the Imperial Irrigation District, said he was eager to participate in the cause to give something back to his community and to help "kids in need."

The motorcycle club's local chapter will also celebrate its ninth anniversary today, Lopez said.

Despite the modest number of members in the club's local chapter, they nevertheless wanted to coordinate the charitable act that would also help improve the image people have of motorcycle enthusiasts, Lopez said.

### Multimedia

VIDEO: Bikers help out families

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"We have never been able to do something big," Lopez said.

The event helped about 50 families. Top Hatter associate Christopher Hawkins said that amounted to 150 children. Hawkins is not a member of the club but does their "public relations," he said.

Hawkins, an Imperial County Office of Education school psychologist who works at Fremont Elementary School in Calipatria, said he was told last fall that there were some children suspected of being so ravenous that they would eat the leftovers of other students.

Through the help of the Calipatria Unified School District, which also oversees Niland schools, a list of needy families was compiled, Hawkins said.

Hawkins credited Superintendent Doug Kline with directing principals to come up with the names.

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JOSELITO VILLERO PHOTO  
Top Hatters Motorcycle Club members leave the parking lot on their way to Calipatria.

### Calendar of Events

November 2009						
Sun	Mon	Tue	Wed	Thu	Fri	Sat
1	2	3	4	5	6	7
8	9	10	11	12	13	14
15	16	17	18	19	20	21
22	23	24	25	26	27	28
29	30					

[Click here for events page.](#)

### Weekly Poll

There is a plan to pump water from the Sea of Cortez to the Salton Sea. What do you think?

- Bad idea
- Good idea, but w ill take too long
- Let the sea dry up
- State should pay for sea restoration

[View Results](#)

#### Comments:

**lissa**  
w rote on May 2, 2009 10:37 PM:

" This is great to see. Kudos to the Top Hatters! "

**abelito**  
w rote on May 2, 2009 9:13 PM:

" Unless you've been continually riding all this time, this business of trying to "relive the 60's and 70's on a Harley" is hardly the way to want to "check out" of this world, as so many Baby Boomer 'Viejitos' have done on East SD county rural roads these past few years. The reflexes just aren't there anymore. A three-wheeler or w/ sidecar?...maybe. "

**calipat**  
w rote on May 2, 2009 2:48 PM:

" Congratulations to my CHS classmate Armando Lopez and the rest of the Top Hatters for remembering and thinking of Calipat and Niland! Many thanks to all of the participants! "

**tundral**  
w rote on May 2, 2009 10:39 AM:

" Cant knock anyone when they are helping the community . Good job Top hatters for a great example in this time of need. "

**marygb**  
w rote on May 2, 2009 6:50 AM:

" All bikers being misfits is such a pathetic way of looking at them. (for anyone who still does) I know there are a few violent/drug dealing/gangster kind of bikers out there, but most look like these guys are like the lawyer in Green Acres!! These guys look great!!! I love the look and my husband is in the process of checking out bikes again! He has been a gear head all of his life/more into the competitive motocross . Steve McQueen was his ol' racing buddy..:)PS. These guys/gals do the work of angels..Thank you very much. Joselito, w/IV Press..I love your photography!! "

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