

Heroes ride motorcycles for charity, awareness

May was the month of motorcycle rides with meaning.

The Carl Perkins Center for the Prevention of Child Abuse hosted the Heroes' Ride which raised awareness and funds to address child abuse. Rolling Thunder honored Vietnam Vets and especially their mission's focus on Prisoners of War and those Missing in Action both here in West Tennessee and with a demonstration run in the nation's capital. And the 17th Annual Memorial Day Poker Run benefitted the Shriners' Hospital for Children.

Dana Bell, motor close manager at Abernathy's Harley Davidson in Union City, said that while there are currently no other large charity-based rides on their events calendar for June

and July small "poker runs" are regularly posted when a need arises.

Poker runs reflect the card game. The ride requires drawing a card at locations along the route, explained Trent Willett, general manager at Abernathy's. Using five card stud rules, prizes are awarded for best hand, worst hand, etc.

Bell says that such rides can raise from a few hundred to a few thousand dollars.

Abernathy's does more than serve as a bulletin board for charity ride dates and information. Last year they hosted the Aaron Vaughn Memorial Ride, and this year Abernathy's is raffling chances to win a 2016 XL 1200CX Roadster valued at more than \$11,000 to benefit Operation 300, a not for

profit organization which hosts adventure camps for children who have lost their fathers as a result of military service and seeks to honor the families of the fallen. The charity was established to honor the legacy of West Tennessee native and Navy SEAL Aaron C. Vaughn. Chief Petty Officer Vaughn was killed in action in 2011 in Afghanistan. A display sharing Vaughn's story and a note of appreciation for Abernathy's support of the camps declaring "your love has filled broken hearts with laughter" dons a wall of the Union City showroom.

Willett also helped start a food drive in November three years ago.

"A lot of [motorcycle] clubs will do toy drives," said Willett. "But nobody was doing a food drive around here." So, with only a couple of weeks to plan and organize, he and fellow members of Hell's Angels were able to fill two 16 ft. trailers with canned goods and, in addition, gifted two food banks with cash donations of \$700 each.

Rides benefitting charities are ways to "give back to the community," Willett said. "People like to get together to have a good time and do good."

"I would say part of it is people have a misconcep-



(Above) The first Heroes' Ride to benefit Carl Perkins Center for the Prevention of Child abuse raised \$1,500.

(At right) Trent Willett shows off a 2016 XL 1200CX Roadster being raffled. Proceeds go to Operation 300.

tion of who you are," explained Willett of bikers' attraction to rides that have a particular reason. "Some may look at the long hair or tattoos [of bikers] and think 'stone, cold.' You want to show people that's not who I am. I care about people like anyone else."



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