

## Martinsburg's Bike Night gears up for Hospice

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An estimated 750 motorcyclists roared into downtown Martinsburg late Saturday afternoon to kick off Bike Night 2010.

The event, which is sponsored by Main Street Martinsburg and the Blue Knights West Virginia Law Enforcement Motorcycle Club, began eight years ago not only to bring people downtown, but to raise money for Hospice of the Panhandle, said K.C. Bohrer, president of Blue Knights West Virginia.

"We want to have an event that people can be proud of," Bohrer said. "We've raised close to \$60,000 for Hospice."

Erik Estrada, who portrayed Francis "Ponch" Poncherello in the 1970s and 1980s television show "CHiPs," attended the event for the second consecutive year. He set up a table at the corner of South Queen and East Burke streets to sign autographs for his adoring fans.

Bohrer said Estrada donates his time to attend the event.

"He's been more than generous," Bohrer said. "He volunteers. He does this for free."

Although Michelle Kurz said she preferred to watch "Three's Company" when she was growing up, she waited in a line that stretched down Burke Street to get Estrada's autograph.

"I just thought it would be neat to have an autograph from someone famous," Kurz said.

The shops downtown made themselves motorcycle-friendly by posting signs welcoming the riders and hanging photos of Peter Fonda and Dennis Hopper from "Easy Rider." About 20 vendors set up booths that sold everything from helmets to jewelry to food and beverages.

Bikers Against Child Abuse occupied a booth on Queen Street to promote its cause.

"We're here to empower kids and protect them," said Dogg, president of the West Virginia Chapter of Bikers Against Child Abuse. "Any venue is a good venue to get the word out when you want to protect children."

Dogg said his club doesn't have an open membership. Prospective riders have to pass a background check and complete a probationary period before they're accepted.

A lot of people stereotype motorcycle riders as troublemakers, Dogg said. Bikers Against Child Abuse shows that isn't the case.

Dogg said the chapter escorts abused children and their guardians to court to ensure no one harms them.

"We don't condone violence," he said. "But we'll do what we can to protect them."

Martinsburg resident Kevin Kisner said he brings his 7-year-old stepson, Anthony, to Bike Night to teach the youngster about the motorcycle culture.

"It's a good event to bring people downtown," Kisner said. "I come out to see the motorcycles and any friends I might know."

