

## **Bike Night Roars Into Town**

By Juliet Seligman / Special to The Journal

MARTINSBURG - Hundreds of eager spectators lined Queen Street Saturday to greet the motorcycle arcade that led into Bike Night 2010.

The ride was comprised of hundreds of motorcyclists who each paid a \$20 fee that will benefit Hospice of the Panhandle, and the ride was led by actor Erik Estrada, affectionately remembered as "Ponch" in his starring role as a motorcycle policeman in the '70s hit TV show "CHiPs."

As motorcyclists revved their engines in response to the raucous crowd's requests, other eventgoers browsed numerous street vendors, including the Williamsport, Md., chapter of Ladies of Harley, which featured a quilt for auction.

Club Officer Roberta Nave said proceeds from the raffle will go toward the ladies' continuing effort to support U.S. troops. This past May the bike club formed a motorcade of more than 32 members, who escorted the Bravo Company of the 147th Marine Unit home from Afghanistan via BWI Airport, she said.

"A lot of people don't think about our guys over there," said Nave, who heads up efforts for the club, including sending Christmas boxes and other messages of support to U.S. troops overseas.

"If it wasn't for them, we wouldn't have the freedoms we have," she said.

Indeed, freedom was the ongoing theme for the bike event, signified by the American flag flying at most vendor locations, and also the word used by many as to the reason they love motorcycles.

"When you ride a Harley, you're stress free," said Jim Seville, who attended the event with his best friend, Lanie Sims, both of Martinsburg. "You hear and smell everything you see."

Seville said he has owned more than 15 motorcycles, and currently he owns a "V-Rod." Sims has owned seven Harley Davidson motorcycles, and he said he currently has a "Super Glide."

"Bike Night's a great event that really helps out the town," Seville said. "It really brings everyone together."

Vendors included Native American jewelry by Squirrel's Nest. Owner Tara "Sunshine" Kesecker said the jewelry has "energy" due to natural stones, and it is a favorite for bikers, "probably because like Indians, bikers have a sense of freedom, too," she said.

"Like the Indians, bikers are drawn to the land and the mountains in order to be free," Kesecker said.

But perhaps the main draw for the evening was Estrada's guest appearance, who offered signed photos and pictures for a \$5 donation to Hospice.

Throngs of excited fans lined up to spend just a moment with the star who K.C. Bohrer, president of event co-sponsor Blue Knights motorcycle club, said signed more than 1,000 copies of his photograph while passionate crowd members intermittently yelled, "We love you, Ponch!"

Estrada said he offered to support the event because he loves cops.

Estrada said he was influenced strongly as a child by a New York policeman, whom he said taught him "respect, honor, integrity and to be able to rely on other people."

Estrada is a member of the Bedford Sheriff's Department, and he said he is currently a very active sup-

porter of the Internet Crimes against Children agency, and he is pushing for more education about this type of crime. Estrada also said he supported DARE for seven years.

"After I fulfilled my dream to act, I became a police officer," Estrada explained, "which was my first passion."

Eventgoers included Dusty and DiAnn Brown, of Martinsburg, who said they came out "because we love Harley's." Dusty said he works as a government security officer and DiAnn as a senior bank teller.

"We love bikes," Dusty Brown said.

"But we're also here to see 'Ponch,'" DiAnn Brown added.

Bands included Surreal, whose drummer Rene Montes said the musical group - which plays classic rock from the '80s and '90s - enjoys doing the event because they "are all bikers in the band too."

"There's no better group of people to play for," he said about the bike event, whose sponsors consisted of bikers who are public servants including both active and retired military and police personnel.

Main Street Director Randy Lewis said about 8,000 to 9,000 people turned out for the event this year.

"This year's turnout was bigger than ever before," Lewis said at about 9:15 p.m. Saturday night. The restaurants are still busy, the beer garden is packed, and people are still on the street.

"It's a great night in downtown Martinsburg."