

East Norriton-based Hogs & Honeys plans fundraisers to support local youth

By M. English, For Digital First Media

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EAST NORRITON >> Robert M. Pirsig, author of the iconic “Zen and the Art of Motorcycle Maintenance,” famously penned, “The study of the art of motorcycle maintenance is really a miniature study of the art of rationality itself. Working on a motorcycle, working well, caring, is to become part of a process, to achieve an inner peace of mind. The motorcycle is primarily a mental phenomenon.”

Plymouth Meeting native Anna Simpson, a third-year business major at Delaware Valley University, describes outings on her 1995 Harley Sportster as “therapy.”

“I originally wanted to get my license because I thought it was a cool thing to do,” Simpson says. “Then, once I had it, I found that I just enjoyed being out there riding. It’s just nice being on back roads, riding along, not thinking about anything in particular ... no worries. Stopping at different places to eat. It’s really relaxing.”

Pirsig’s observation was triggered by an extended motorcycle trip with son Christopher in 1968; Simpson’s, by early exposure to riding courtesy parents Sheldon and Laura.

The 2015 Plymouth Whitmarsh High School grad is also volunteer spokeswoman for the East Norriton-based Hogs & Honeys motorcycle club and its affiliated 501(c)(3) Hogs & Honeys Foundation for Kids. The group traces its roots to 2004 and since then has raised some \$300,000 for local charities that benefit Montgomery County children, among them, Mission Kids, Silver Springs Martin Luther School and Variety Club. Hogs & Honeys’ signature events include its annual Spring Fling and Christmas in July benefits.

On Oct. 5, members will host a Dine and Donate at P.J. Whelihan’s in The Marketplace at Oaks (180 Mill Road) and on Nov. 4, Comedy Night at Imperial’s Catering (40 E. First Ave.) in Trappe. Additional information is posted on Hogs & Honeys’ Facebook page. Both events are open to the public.

On Sept. 20, Dan Doyle and Damian Ercole, proprietors of Billet Proof Designs and Consulting in Collegeville, hosted The Great Give Back Motorcycle Show as a Hogs & Honeys benefit and raised \$1,000-plus for the group. Co-host Conshohocken Brewing Co. added 20 percent of its proceeds from the same event, pushing the total take to some \$1,750.

“Whatever we do, the money has to stay local, and it has to go to kids ... basically, 18 and under,” Simpson says. “Yes ... I know some people want to do something but have a hard time picking [a cause or charity]. I think the thing is, pick one thing and just do it.”

She emphasizes, “All kinds of people belong to Hogs & Honeys and all kinds support — and are needed to support — our fundraising projects ... not just bikers.

“I definitely got my foot in the door because of mom and dad,” Simpson says. “But one of the things that I love about our organization, it’s like one big family. Our members are all kinds of people ... just everyday people who go to school and go to work ... all kinds of people who want to help other people when they’re down. Hogs & Honeys isn’t just for bikers. We have people from all walks of life volunteering and attending our events.”

There is one common denominator.

“We all truly believe in what we’re doing ... in our mission,” Simpson says. “Any money we raise goes directly to kids ... to, hopefully, make life better for them. And a lot of times, when groups raise money, they don’t get to see the impact they make because the money is going out of state or out of the country. Not with us. And I think that’s one of the things that keeps me involved. With us, you can see what you’re accomplishing.”

The proximity of the group’s beneficiaries keeps things personal, too, Simpson adds.

“The stories that we’ve heard ... some of them are heartbreaking,” she says. “One in 10 children is abused before they reach 18, and something like 12,500 children are considered in poverty in Montgomery County. We’re slowly starting to do individual grants and scholarships, and our hope is, these kids can get past some of the terrible stuff they’ve experienced and see a future they couldn’t have imagined before. I grew up without those hardships, and I think when that’s the case, we take things for granted. I realize now how privileged I’ve been to experience the atmosphere I grew up in, and that makes me want to do even more for these kids.”

An accelerated undergraduate course load — combined with early enrollment in master’s classes and a part-time job in Plymouth Township’s Code Enforcement Department — doesn’t leave Simpson much free time, but she “can’t imagine” eliminating Hogs & Honeys from her busy schedule.

“Being a part of Hogs & Honeys Foundation for Kids is something I wouldn’t change for the world,” Simpson says. “The whole committee puts in countless hours on top of our everyday lives, which are already busy, but every minute is worth it. We’ve created a family within the committee, but most importantly, we are changing the kids’ lives because ‘It’s all for the kids!’

“Being able to have businesses like Billet Proof and Conshohocken Brewing and the hundreds of others support us event after event, year after year, is humbling ... a reminder that what we do is important.”

Additional information is available at hogshoneys.org.

URL: <http://www.timesherald.com/general-news/20170925/east-norriton-based-hogs-amp-honeys-plans-fundraisers-to-support-local-youth>

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