

# Motorcyclists to hit the road for a cause

By: **CHRIS ENGLISH** (Fri, May/16/2008)

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Mention the word biker 20 years ago, and many people flashed to an image of a long-haired, unshaven Hell's Angel just itching to roar into the nearest bar and break a beer bottle over someone's head.

While that stereotype still exists, it's been worn down considerably over the last few years, said two local motorcyclists who will participate in Sunday's fourth Ride for Recovery. The event benefits treatment programs at the Livengrin Foundation for Addiction Recovery on Hulmeville Road in Bensalem.

Both requested their full names not be used because they are recovering alcoholics, though they've been sober for more than a decade.

"It's not like it was so many years ago, when bikers were thought of as such a bad thing," said B.B., a 52-year-old Bensalem resident who rides a 2004 Harley-Davidson Ultra Classic. "These days, bikers can be MBAs or any other kind of professional you can think of, and they have money and are looking to enjoy themselves and help out on a lot of different causes," he continued.

"It still exists to some extent, but the [stigma] on bikers is definitely not what it used to be," agreed Bobby B., 43, of Falls, a Livengrin employee and co-chairman of the committee that organizes the ride.

"The stereotype is still there of the biker as a guy who runs a meth lab or starts fights outside bars," added Livengrin spokesman Keith Mason. "But now bikers come in all ages and can be doctors, dentists, teachers, lawyers and professionals of all kinds. When you see a motorcycle going by, the driver might be a podiatrist, your pastor or the guy next door who coaches Little League. It's a whole new world since the Marlon Brando and Lee Marvin days."

Mason referred to two stars of the 1953 biker flick "The Wild One."

It's especially appropriate that Livengrin uses a motorcycle ride to raise money for drug and alcohol addiction treatment, Mason said.

"There's still a certain stigma about the motorcycle world and certainly a stigma about the drug and alcohol rehab world," he said. "If we're going to team up with any group from the outside on a major fundraiser, what better group than guys who have been fighting off their own stigma about who they supposedly are."

Many bikers have well-defined social consciousnesses and participate in several rides every year to benefit various causes, said Bobby B., who rides a 1983 Harley.

"There are so many of these events now, if you're organizing one you have to do it months in advance so you don't conflict with another one," he said.

Bobby B. and B.B. said they're especially proud of their participation in the Livengrin ride because many people are reluctant to donate to such a cause.

"Sometimes people hear the words drug and alcohol and get turned off," said B.B. He said he belongs to a motorcycle club of recovering alcoholics and drug addicts, called the Messengers, who will participate in Sunday's ride.

"It's easier for many to donate to something like Alex's Lemonade Stands [to benefit cancer research]," he continued. "But I've been through this and want to give back to someone who has no clue."

No one is immune to drug or alcohol addiction, added Bobby B.

"There are rehab programs filled with once very successful people who had drugs and alcohol put them right down into the gutter," he said. "People think of an alcoholic as a bum living on the curb. But right now, there is an executive in this country making hundreds of thousands of dollars a year on his way to that curb. Drugs and alcohol can take you there."

Last year's ride drew 199 motorcyclists and raised \$21,000, said Mason. This year's goals are 250 riders and \$50,000.

Sunday's event starts at 9 a.m. with registration at Livengrin, 4833 Hulmeville Road at the intersection of Mechanicsville Road. Motorcyclists will then take off to various points in central and Upper Bucks County, returning to Livengrin at about noon for a family pig roast picnic and other events ending about 5 p.m.

Motorcyclists pay \$20 to participate and \$10 for each additional rider on a bike. The price for those who just want to come to the picnic is \$10 and \$5 for children 12 and under. The money raised from tickets and corporate sponsorships goes right to treatment and none to overhead, Mason said.

For more information, call 215-638-5200, ext. 310 or visit [livengrin.org](http://livengrin.org) on the Web.