



## These motorcyclists ride for a reason

By Wade Coggeshall

AVON— Whatever you do, don't call the American Legion Riders a club.

"We are an organization," says John Reynolds, who is serving as membership chairperson of Hendricks County's first Riders chapter, based out of American Legion Post 145.

Sure they wear leather and ride big, gnarly Harleys, but they're nothing like the Hells Angels of lore.

"We're oriented around doing good," says Rick Haberman, communications director for the American Legion Riders of Indiana. "This is not just another patch on our backs."

The preamble to the Riders' constitution states, "We, Your American Legion Riders, ride for God and country, the American Legion family, and allied veterans everywhere."

Phillip Burnside, a charter member of the Hendricks County Riders chapter, said, "Practically everything we do is for our veterans in some way — those serving now and those who've served before."

The annual Blue Star Salute Ride is one of the organization's largest functions. This year's edition attracted hundreds of motorcycle enthusiasts in honoring military families. Now that Hendricks County has a Riders chapter, members are hoping for a thousand participants in next year's edition, which is set for May 17.

Then there's the annual Son's Run, which benefits Post 145's Sons of the American Legion chapter. Nationally, Riders conduct the "Rolling Thunder" rally every Memorial Day Weekend in Washington, D.C., in honor of prisoners of war and veterans who are missing in action. Various other functions raise funds for Veterans Administration hospitals and other charities that aid vets. Riders chapters also have rides for soldiers' funerals, welcome homes, and sendoffs. Benefits for police and firefighters also are in the mix.

But it's not just the military Riders want to help. They also work to aid the communities they live in. That includes staging motorcycle rides that aid charities for needy families, shelters, hospitals, and more.

That's why next time you see a large group of motorcyclists on the road, your first instinct shouldn't be to drive the other way.

"We want people to know what we're about," says member Donna Williams. "Sometimes we'll pull up next to somebody at a light and they'll roll their windows up. But they don't realize we may be on a ride to help someone with lupus."

If the response to Post 145's call to start a Hendricks County chapter of the Riders is any indication, plenty of people already know these motorcyclists ride for more than just purely selfish reasons. They haven't even had their ride yet, and already membership is close to 50. That already makes it one of the largest such chapters in the state. Interested parties from as far as Lebanon and Mooresville have attended organizational meetings.

To be a Rider you must first be a member of the American Legion, its auxiliary, or Sons of the American Legion and be a legally registered motorcycle owner. Spouses also can join so long as they're legally married and also a member of one of the aforementioned groups. All fund-raising rides are open to the public.

The first official meeting is 7 p.m. Wednesday at Post 145, 375 S. State Road 267. Monthly meetings will be conducted every third Wednesday.

The chapter's inaugural ride is on New Year's Day at Post 145. Free coffee and doughnuts will be served starting at 10 a.m. The ride starts at noon. Participation is free, but donations are welcome.

"This is our way of saying thank you to all of the riders who help in these charity events,"

Haberman says. "They get nickled and dimed all year for charity. We want to start the new year with a free ride and meet new people."

Anyone joining the American Legion Riders of Post 145 before Dec. 31 will be a charter member of the chapter. For more information, visit the website at [www.avonlegion.org](http://www.avonlegion.org).

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