

## EAST JORDAN

# Lady Biker Days: Gals and their machines take the spotlight

BY ANDY TAYLOR-FABE  
Record-Eagle staff writer

The Lady Bikers may wear black leather and drive ear-bleedingly loud Harleys, but the Hell's Angels they are not.

Instead of inciting mayhem and violence like the infamous biker gangs of old, the Lady Bikers do things a little differently. They hold barbecues, go river-rafting, play euchre and give line-dancing lessons — not to mention raise money for children with cancer.

Dawn Johnson, who took up motorcycle riding in 2000, started East Jordan's Lady Biker Days mostly because she didn't know many women with whom she could ride.

"Whenever you go to a car show or a bike show, it's always guys and their machines," she said.

A Corvette owner as well as a dedicated biker, Johnson feels that women are forced to "sit on the sidelines" at gear-head events because of the traditional male orientation of the activities.

Lady Biker Days gives women a chance to take the spotlight and, as Johnson said, "to show people that their bikes can be just as tough-looking and just as beautiful."

Now in its third year, the event draws female bikers from Traverse City to North Carolina, including single women, women with families, grandmothers, mother/daughter duos, nurses and even a couple detectives from Detroit's vice squad.

Although the first Lady Biker Day had only 25 participants, the event quickly became so popular that

Johnson had to limit the size.

"We're willing to grow, but we want to grow slowly," she said.

The prospect of having a horde of bikers roll into town might seem a little scary to some people, and Johnson said residents of East Jordan had their share of apprehension at first.

"The first year, people thought 'Oh man, all these motorcycles — they're going to bring a rough crowd.' Now they love it," she said.

Actually, Johnson said that many of the women are surprised at how well they are treated.

"They're not used to having the red carpet rolled out for them," she said.

With everyone from local firemen to Camp Quality, which provides outdoor activities for children suffering from cancer, to a pas-



Record-Eagle file photo

**Dawn Johnson started Lady Biker Days to give women a biker event that's all theirs.**

tor from the Williamsburg's New Hope Community Church (who also happens to be an avid biker) getting involved, events like Lady

Biker Days help raise the status of bikers, Johnson said.

"There is a new awareness," she added, "the old mystique is gone."

One aspect of motorcycle-riding that has not changed, however, is the level of danger associated with "the sport," as Johnson calls it. Last September, while riding with a friend on U.S. 131, Johnson slammed into the back of a truck, shattering her left leg, kneecap and arm.

But after five surgeries including a bone graft to replace six inches of her femur, and months of rehab, Johnson has no notions of parking her bike permanently.

"It's just like any other activity with risk involved," she said, "like skiing — if you love it, you have to take that risk."

*Lady Biker Days are Aug. 15-16 in East Jordan. Call 536-0558 for details.*

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