

?Riders? bring big bucks to Kerry?s Place



By Brock Weir

Before Brian Baynit's nephew was diagnosed with Asperger's Syndrome, he didn't claim to know very much about anything that could be found on the autism spectrum.

The same cannot be said today. Since then, he and his friends threw themselves head-long into doing what they could to help those families who are struggling with this group of neurological disorders, raising thousands for the Aurora-based Kerry's Place Autism Services in the process.

If you're thinking they did this through a relatively sedate fundraiser, you would be mistaken. He and his motorcycle group, the Lost Boyz, kicked things up several notches with a charity ride and wash for the local non-profit, which celebrates its 40th anniversary this year.

Over the past four years, their events have featured car washes, activities for the whole family, and daredevil motorcycle stunts (performed by the professionals, of course), but their most recent efforts have brought in record-busting revenues for Kerry's Place, an organization which has spread to homes and learning centres throughout southern Ontario.

The Lost Boyz will be on hand this Saturday at Town Park to present a cheque to Kerry's Place at the organization's annual Volunteer Appreciation Event, held in conjunction with the Aurora Farmers' Market.

?We support Kerry's Place because they serve you from when you are young all the way to when you are old,? explains Baynit. ?They have different things to educate kids like camps, and they help with respite services so parents can still have a life and accomplish what they need to.?

Oftentimes people living with autism experience a degree of stigma because individuals at large might not understand the many facets of the disorder. Stigma often paves the way to stereotype, and these are issues Kerry's Place has sought to challenge. In this vein, the Lost Boyz have found an additional affinity with the group.

One of the reasons the Lost Boyz wanted to get involved in their respective communities ? members live in York Region, Toronto, and Peel ? was to challenge some of the ?stigma? surrounding bikers. They prefer the term ?riders? and, as such, they are just a group of guys wanting to spend some time together in a group doing what they love. Sometimes, however, due to the way they dress or their preferred mode of travel, they can be viewed as ?apart? from the community, he explains.

This is not the case at Kerry's Place.

?When I came into Kerry's Place to speak to them about doing events and supporting them, it seems like a family over there,? he says. ?They welcomed me with open arms and they didn't judge me at all in any way. We want to show people we are part of the community, and just a bunch of guys trying to ride our bikes together. We want to have a good impact on the community, and that is what we're trying to accomplish. Slowly but surely, it will happen.?

As with so many things, the origins of the name ?Lost Boyz? for this group have been lost to the mists of time, but over that time it has taken on a significant meaning for them. ?Get lost!?! has become their slogan, and something they use liberally in any instance in which they find discrimination and prejudice.

It is message they have been trying to impart to those who attend their events each year and one Banyit says has gained traction.

?With so many members of the group, we reach different areas and keep building that group of people as years go on,? he says. ?It has reached down to kids that are four or five years old; the father might ride the bike and mom brought the kids just to have fun. We have actually had grandparents come and they love watching the stunt show and the bikes flying around the parking lots.

?It ranges from four to 90, so there is no limit for us! Last year, we had \$1,500 for Kerry's Place and right now it is beyond \$3,000.?

The 7th Annual Kerry's Place Appreciation Day will get underway at Town Park this Saturday, July 5, from 11 a.m. to 2 p.m. Events feature Art In The Park, food from the Optimist Club of Aurora, and other activities. For more information, visit www.kerrysplace.org.