



Bikers give back: Local chapters donate to Backstoppers

by Cory Davenport, Contributing Writer
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ALTON - Biker clubs from across the River Bend presented a check for \$8,014 to **Backstoppers** Tuesday evening at the **Moose Lodge** in Alton.

That money was raised by the clubs through a fundraiser held at the Moose Lodge on Oct. 8, 2016. **Chris "Doc" Hartshorn**, Treasurer of the **Bluff City Motorcycle Club**, said the event featured entertainment for the entire family, including rides in a survival helicopter from Jerseyville. It was given to former **St. Louis County Police Chief and Executive Director of the St. Louis chapter of Backstoppers Ronald Battelle**.

Backstoppers is an organization dedicated to providing for the families of first responders killed in the line of duty with "no strings attached." More recently, Backstoppers has also committed to providing aid for families of first responders who have suffered catastrophic injuries while on duty. Currently, the St. Louis chapter of Backstoppers is providing for 88 families, which includes 66 children. That aid costs as much as \$1.2 million annually for the organization.

"These are great people up here who took it upon themselves to raise the money," Battelle said. "They brought together motorcycle clubs with a mission. It was successful and very appreciated."

Holly Brown, of the **Dream Weavers Motorcycle Club**, said she was inspired to host the event after reading an article about motorcycle clubs in Tennessee joining together to benefit a fallen officer. Recent events against law enforcement across the country also contributed to Brown's dedication to the cause.



"After Dallas happened, I knew I had to do something to help," Brown said, referencing the July 7, 2016 attack by **Micah Johnson** against Dallas police officers, which resulted in the death of five officers as well as Johnson.

Brown's brother, **Pat Brockman** is a police officer serving in Hudson, New York. She said she is worried for his safety every day when she hears about violent criminals targeting police officers. She said the event at the Moose Lodge will become an annual tradition, with next year's already planned for Sept. 30, 2017.

After receiving the check from members of the assembled bike clubs, Battelle said he was thankful for their gesture.

"I've been a police officer for 40 years, and it is reassuring to all police, fire and EMS people that someone will be there for their families if they fall in the line of duty," he said.

Battelle said he the organization was currently helping the young family of slain St. Louis County Officer and Alton native **Blake Snyder**. Snyder's last place of residence was in Edwardsville.

Alton Deputy Fire Chief Mark Harris was at the presentation. He said the Alton Fire Department has realized the importance of Backstoppers since two of their firefighters were killed in the line of duty in 1992.