

Former Wish Child to lead 5th annual Rides for Wishes

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ALTON - This year's Ride for Wishes will be led by former Wish Child Megan Mersinger who had her wish to visit Hawaii come true nearly eight years ago.

Today Megan, 25, rides her own motorcycle, a Kawasaki Ninja, works as a veterinarian technician and likes to skydive.

“I’m looking forward to seeing all the Make-A-Wish people and supporting the ride,” Megan said.

Megan comes from a Make-A-Wish family. Megan went to Hawaii at age 17 for her Wish. Her older brother, Aaron, was a Wish Child in 1997. He was 10 at the time and took a Big Red Boat cruise from Florida with a stay at Disney World. Aaron, now 30, is an auto mechanic and said he’s looking forward to riding in a Slingshot that will be part of the run.

“Make-A-Wish is awesome,” Aaron said, adding that he still recalls the cruise and Disney World fondly. “There are a lot of bad times in my life as well as others’ lives, but for Make-A-Wish to give us an ‘up’ means the world to us.”

Both Megan and Aaron continue to fight cystic fibrosis.

Their mother, Terri Mersinger, is a member of the Southern Illinois Volunteers for Make-A-Wish IL Council.

“This is our way of giving back,” Terri Mersinger said.

Their dad, Russ Mersinger, is a motorcycle enthusiast like Megan and her mother and helps out at Make-A-Wish events. Mom and Dad will be at this year’s Ride for Wishes on their Indian motorcycles. The family makes their home in Madison County.

The 70-mile, nonstop ride is set for Saturday, Sept, 22, and leaves at noon from Ted’s Motorcycle World, 4103 Humbert Road, Alton. The ride ends at VFW Post 1308, 4445 N. Alby St., Alton. The cost is \$20 per rider and \$10 per passenger.

The first 100 online registrants will be eligible for a \$100 cash prize drawing after the run. Register at mawsil.redpodium.com/ride-for-wishes (note NO www).

The cost includes a barbeque dinner catered by Carvers, a goodie bag and a Ride patch and/or rocker for each person.

Registration begins at Ted’s at 10 a.m. Free coffee and bagels will be available. The ride leaves at noon, rain or shine.

The Bull 93.7, new country music, will be there with an on-air personality handing out freebies from 10 a.m. until noon, thanks to a special arrangement by GCS Credit Union,

the ride's Signature Sponsor. GCS personnel will also be there with bandanas and other premiums.

The GCS Credit Union has been the ride's signature sponsor for three years.

"We can't say enough good thing about GCS's support for the Wishes Ride, said Norma Glazebrook, one of the principal organizers. "That support has helped us make wishes come true for so many children in our area."

Another key supporter this year is Eaton's B-Line in Highland, a global manufacturing concern. The company is the Exquisite Diamond Sponsor of the Wishes Ride and a longtime supporter of Make-A-Wish.

The annual Ride for Wishes began in 2014 to help children facing life-threatening illnesses. In Illinois last year, the Make-A-Wish organization granted more than 700 wishes at a cost on more than \$6,000 per wish. All money raised by this ride goes to help youngsters in Madison, Jersey, Calhoun, Macoupin, Greene and St. Clair counties.

Last year's ride raised more than \$25,000 to help children in the six counties.

The ride is organized by the Southern Illinois Volunteers for Make-A-Wish, IL to help children in Southern Illinois as they battle such ailments as cystic fibrosis, brain tumors and cancers.

The ride route features an on-the-road contest for riders with a \$100 prize. At ride's end, there'll be more contests, prizes, auctions, a 50-50 raffle and a drawing for a \$250 gift card to Ted's Motorcycle World, courtesy of GCS Credit Union

Riders will hear from children who have had their wishes granted and those awaiting wishes. Those children and their families will be guests of honor.

Glazebrook is the longest serving Make-A-Wish volunteer in the state and has granted more wishes than anyone other Illinois volunteer. Seeing a child's face light up when a wish is granted is always a thrill for her, she said. "You never forget that."

Glazebrook said she is especially thankful for support from the community, particularly GCS Credit Union. The credit union began in 1941 in a single office in Granite City. GCS now serves members at eight branches across Southwestern Illinois, offering options for checking and savings accounts as well as personal, auto and home equity loans. The web address is www.mygcscu.com.