

Soldiers share street smarts



PHOTO: J.D. Hardesty

Director of Emergency Services and SHAPE Harley-Davidson Club member Lt. Col. Dennis Zink leads 31 fellow "bikers" from across the Chièvres Garrison community on a Motorcycle Safety Sunday "road out" and "toy ride" May 20 on Caserne Daumerie.



PHOTO: J.D. Hardesty

One of the Harley-Davidsons carried its own safety message.

Where it matters most... with motorcycle safety

By J.D. Hardesty
Benelux EDGE Editor

Some Soldiers attend the school of hard knocks. Others prefer their street smarts to text books. Still others take the "lessons learned" approach to increasing their operational knowledge.

Where does the "book smart" blend with experience...? Where it matters most... with motorcycle safety.

According to Rudy Magain, Safety Officer for U.S. Army Garrison Benelux, the number of Soldiers killed on motorcycles has doubled within the past five years.

"In 2001, 15 Soldiers were killed Army-wide riding motorcycles, though there were no motorcycle fatalities in the U.S. Army in Europe," he said. "That number continues to grow every year. In 2005, motorcycle fatalities sur-



PHOTO: Cis Spook

Gary Wilson, a member of the SHAPE Harley Davidson Club, shows Jordan from the Orphanage La Maison at Ostiches how to play with the toy he just received.



PHOTO: J.D. Hardesty

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passed private-owned vehicle fatalities with 40 riders dying in crashes that year."

The Army has armed communities with motorcycle safety campaigns to help save Soldiers lives.

Bikers across the three Chièvres Garrison communities joined the SHAPE Harley-Davidson Club on May 20 for a Motorcycle Safety Sunday at Caserne Daumerie as part of a "toy ride" and "road out" and safety day.

Many of the members kicked off the motorcycle fellowship by attending a chapel service and barbecue. Hondas, Kawasakis, BMWs, Harley "fatboys" and "Indians" – a total of 32 bikes lined the streets as their owners went through a Safety Office sponsored checklist.

Representatives from the Motorcycle Safety Foundation shared a few quick tips for the group ride before the bikers hit the Belgian streets:

- Arrive on time with a full tank of gas
- Hold a riders' meeting to discuss the route, rest and fuel stops, hand signals, etc.
- Keep the group size manageable
- Ride in a staggered formation that allows a cushion of safety so motorcyclists have time and space to react to dangers
- Avoid side-by-side formations

As the Director of Emergency Services and a member of the SHAPE Harley-Davidson Club, Lt. Col. Dennis Zink set up the "group ride" with a charity "toy run" to Orphanage La Maison at Ostiches and Orphanage Le Clos at Arbre, both located near Ath, to deliver toys

to the children during their ride from Chièvres to Tournai, Belgium.

"It is a nice thing to do," stated Anthony Greco "and we're bringing them some joy. That's why it is important for us to stop by these two orphanages."

The USAG Benelux Drivers Testing Station will host several Motorcycle Safety Foundation Classes during this coming spring and summer.

Sponsored by U.S. Army in Europe, the classes will consist of a Basic Rider Course and an Experienced Rider Course.

The training is offered to all military and civilian personnel riding motorcycles in Europe. Others may attend the classes on a space-available basis.

○ The Basic Rider Course will be offered June 8, 9 and Sept. 14, 15 from 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. in Building 105 on Chièvres Air Base.

○ The Experienced Rider Course will be offered July 21 and Aug. 25 from 8 a.m. to 5 p.m. in Building 105 on Chièvres Air Base.

There were five critical messages the Motorcycle Safety Foundation emphasized to anyone wanting to ride motorcycles in Europe.

- Get trained and licensed
- Wear protective gear
- Ride unimpaired
- Ride within your limits
- Be a lifelong learner

"I am not aware of any motorcycle fatality in the last few years across the Benelux," Magain said. "Motorcycle riders need to keep following the basic riding rules."