

From the desk of Executive Director of ABATE of Wisconsin

By Dave Chubby Charlebois

Well, summer is in full swing and there's a million things to do every weekend. If you're like me, the time flies by faster and faster the older that you get. So, optimizing that time is a huge concern to me. I'm glad my son Nate enjoys riding the motorcycle as much as me, because I think I'd have trouble getting out to events and meetings if I just had to leave him home. Knowing this leads me to wonder how many people aren't involved in ABATE of WI because they're busy raising a family, or working, or planning for the future. If you're reading this you've already crossed the threshold and are at the very least doing something to protect your rights to ride free. What do you think everybody else's excuse is? When was the last time you asked someone to join ABATE?

I have been to and spoken at countless ABATE meeting over the last ten years. Most recently I was invited to region 7B's meeting held over the Fourth of July weekend. Like most meetings I speak at, these people get it. There were people of all ages in attendance and although there weren't any sport bikers there, there was a pretty good mix of scoots including a few metrics. It definitely depends where you are as to how diverse your meeting turnout may be, but it's fairly normal to see more than just Harley riders at a regional meeting. It is refreshing to speak at our ABATE meetings because like the members (and some prospective members) in 7B, people are in attendance because they want to make a difference and they take their freedoms seriously.

Besides meetings, during the summer I take the time to help out different regions at bike nights and events where we have a vendor spot pitching ABATE membership. If you're a new member that has joined at one of these events I'd like to say "Welcome to ABATE of WI" and I'm glad you decided to make a difference for bikers in Wisconsin. It seems to me, for every twenty people we talk to, we may get one to join. Why do you think that is? Unlike my old friend and former Deputy Director Dan Van Linn, I'm not very good at getting people to pull out their wallets and dish out the meager twenty-five dollars it takes to be a member. Seven cents a day to protect your freedom shouldn't be such a difficult thing to pitch. But, although I get head nods and vocal agreement of the things we do, not everyone is willing to join. I've heard all the excuses; I don't have a bike anymore (I'll accept that without argument), I don't have enough cash on me, I just don't have time to be involved, and of course my favorite, the blank stare of "you mean I have to do something besides buy a bike to enjoy freedom". All of these except the first are bullsh*t excuses and I'd like to tell people that, but that would be the way to promote a solid grassroots brotherhood like ours.

I do understand if someone can't afford it, but it's tough to take when you know that person just paid six bucks for a beer and if they have a Harley you know they paid at least one hundred dollars for any accessory they added to what is already a pretty pricey bike.

As for time, who asked for time? I love and respect everyone that takes the time to not only attend region meetings but steps up to help fund-raise in their region and possibly even comes out to help promote ABATE, but that's not required.

Of course I've made it pretty obvious that the blank stare is like a thorn in my side, I never know how to talk to people like that because of course you know those are the people that love the freebies we give out or want to purchase a yard sign and even have the gall to ask us to deliver them because they couldn't possibly take it home on their bike or attend a meeting to get one. And of course those are also the people I see leaving with loud pipes roaring, half in the bag, and helmetless. You're welcome. Really?

On the other hand, the single statement I hear the most when I ask a new member why they didn't join before is "nobody asked me". So, I'd like everyone's help increasing our membership. If you are already an ABATE of WI member, you get it. You must have a friend that thinks like you, ask them to join. Ease them into it, take them to a meeting, or tell them why you feel it's important. I doubt you'll lose a friend just by asking and who knows, they might gain a few brothers if they make the right choice. So, let's make it our mission this month to ask someone you know to join, you won't regret it.

I very much understand if family duties prevent you from riding as much as you like or from being as involved in ABATE of WI as you'd like. But, I'm here to tell you we have solved some of that with our Junior Patriots program and family campout. Our Annual Family Campout will be held this year August 7-9 and it's the perfect excuse to leave the house with your whole family and enjoy your land at ABATE Acres. This is a bring your own everything event that is no charge for ABATE family and friends. There is plenty to do for people of all ages so pack up the kids or grandkids and join us for some clean biker fun. Respectful dogs are allowed and all the facilities will be open and available. Pat Sheridan made us an enormous grill last year so our Saturday potluck dinner will leave everyone full and satisfied. If you have any questions please contact me by email, and prepare to make the trip and enjoy some family fun with us.

There's plenty of summer left so let's go out and enjoy the wind and get to some ABATE events. Don't forget to bring along a friend. There's plenty to do this month all over the state and if this August is anything like last year, you'll need the wind to cool you down. Please help me spread our message by asking people if they will join

us and if you have a particularly successful strategy for getting people to join don't be afraid to share it. Remember we're all in this together, your freedoms are not free. Until next month... Ride Free.

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Here are a couple of pictures from the Veteran's Freedom Ride and Memorial Poker Run in Alpha, MI. I am hoping to attend this year. If you got an open date that weekend I will maybe see you there August 29th.



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