

### 23rd Annual Windjammers Toy Run (Cover Story)

by Wally Wersching

On December 18th, 2011, the Windjammers held their 23rd annual toy run for the Children's Homes of Cleveland County, NC. All week, I was watching the weather to see what it would be like on Sunday. It turned out to be a perfect riding day - sunny and in the mid 50's. It was almost too warm when we stopped. Many people took off their leathers and were in shirt-sleeves but it was very comfortable while riding.

At about noon, my first stop was the clubhouse for some sausage biscuits. One of the Windjammers was cooking the pork BBQ for the party after the run on his special BBQ cooker - it was huge and specially designed for cooking pork. He and a couple club members had been there since 3:00AM. Cooking pork is a long job and takes a lot of tending to get the pork cooked just right. He gave me a sample of the ribs and it was "melt in your mouth" good!



Later, I headed for the Cleveland Mall for the gathering before the run. The sun was bright and the crowd was already pretty large. As I stood watching the bikes come in, I saw some old friends. We talked and laughed. Before I knew it, the parking lot was overflowing with bikes - many decorated for the season and carrying presents. A few of the bikers were in costume. I met the Snowman that I had missed at Murphey's Toy run last month. He had "open heart" surgery but was in high spirits for the run. Santa was there too and all the children had to talk with him.

At 1:30PM as the run was getting ready to leave the Mall, I headed out to get to the home before they arrive so I could take some great pictures of them riding in. I have been doing this for quite a few years and the club really likes the pictures I take. Along the way, I saw the people lined up to see all the bikes on parade.

When I got to the home, I looked for Margie, the director. She was sitting at a table in front of the home - all smiles. I gave her a CD with pictures of all 22 Toy Runs so far along with a copy of the February 2011 USRiderNews that I had saved for her. It had my article about last year's toy run. She thanked me because she normally doesn't read USRiderNews.

That's when I saw Evelyn and April. Evelyn was Cindy's boss a few years ago and April is her daughter. I helped April get over a hurdle in high school Algebra. After a couple meet-



ings with me, she became an "A" student and eventually a math tutor herself. She had it in her all the time, I was happy to help her let it out.



Once the bikes started to pull in and park, it was more than a little chaotic. Bikes were parked all over and riders were hurrying to get in the line to drop off their gifts. I'm surprised that there aren't any accidents. Bikes are going in all directions at the same time. Every rider has the opportunity to walk up to the home and give the gift to Margie or one of her volunteers. Many of the children help stack them in the rooms as they're filled. That's what makes this toy run better than many of the others. The bikers actually get to interact with some of the kids that will receive our gifts.

This year, the children gave out candy canes and a thank you note with a poem sung to the music of "Winter Wonderland".

"Motors roar  
Do you hear them?  
On the road  
Traffic's slowing



A beautiful sight  
We're happy today  
Watching motorcycles come our way.

Later on  
We'll be dreaming  
As we lay by the lit tree  
That we were unafraid  
As cycles came into the yard  
Loaded with gifts for boys and girls".

Again I saw some old friends as they rode in and got in line. The bikes kept coming and coming. I knew that this one was one of the biggest ever. The largest was a few years ago when 789 were here on a day in the mid 70's.



After dropping off their gifts, every biker was invited back to the clubhouse for some excellent BBQ. Needless to say, many stopped by for a bite before heading home.

When I got home, I downloaded the 460 pictures I took and burned them on a CD. I went back to the Windjammers clubhouse for some BBQ. I also gave "Teddy Bear" (club president) a copy of the photo CD. The local two-man band - "The Sloantones" were on stage playing some good southern rock.



When all was said and done, over 1,000 bikers (largest number ever) donated a houseful of gifts and the Windjammers donated over \$18,000.00. That was a fantastic turnout and donation for the economic situation we are in again this year.



On Monday, they started planning for next year's fund raising. They raise funds all year for this event by sponsoring other events throughout the year - like golf outings, wrestling matches and the "Christmas in July" run.

I've been to every one of the 23 Toy Runs and hope that it continues for a long time. I want to be around for the 50th - I'll only be 94!

