

## Political party aims to serve bikers

Platform includes fighting laws requiring helmets

By Duke Behnke Post-Crescent staff writer

NEENAH \_ Businessman Steve "Mad" Erato has formed the American Biker Party to serve as a grassroots alternative to the Republican and Democratic political parties.

The American Biker Party will be geared toward motorcyclists, but the party is open to anyone, regardless of whether they own a motorcycle.

"If your grandmother wants to come, she is welcome," Erato said Monday.

The organizational meeting of the party will be held at 8 p.m. June 23 in the basement of Erato's business, Eagle Nation Cycles, 206 Main St.

Erato said he expects about 100 people to attend to help shape the platform and agenda of the party. He said the party will emphasize less government than either the Republican or Democratic parties and will fight against laws requiring motorcyclists to wear helmets. "We believe in freedom of choice," he said. "We believe there is way too much government involved in everybody's life. We are the ones paying for all of this government intervention."

Erato said the party would campaign against the North American Free Trade Agreement and the loss of American jobs. "It seems to be killing the average blue-collar worker," he said. "These aren't just biker issues."

Michael "M.L." Funk of Neenah said he would attend the initial meeting of the party. "I

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### The Rumble

Summer is a time when friends gather around, to enjoy parties and also the fun to be found.

We are entertained with music and bike games, meeting so many people you sometimes forget names.

Thousands of people coming together as one, to socialize, party, and just to have fun.

The atmosphere at a biker gathering is great, not a trace of attitudes, animosity, or hate.

Sometimes there is a feast in the form of a pig roast, drawing a sizeable crowd from coast to coast.

There are some that come to view women and drink beer, and others who show up for the good music they'll hear.

Plenty of people return home with new tattoos, along with a nasty hangover from beer and booze.

Many fond memories of parties from the past, so good that they will not be the last.

Some people have traveled from far and wide, and no doubt they loved every mile of the ride.

There's nothing better than riding off into the night, and continuing on even after you greet morning's light.

The rumble of a motorcycle never fails to make me smile, and I know that sound will never go out of style.

Jessi Roman

want to be a part of something to make a difference," he said.

Funk said neither the Republicans nor

the Democrats are adequately representing bikers.

He said the days of weighing the advantages of the two parties seem

to have disappeared. "Now it's to the point where you have to vote

for the lesser of the evils," he said. "That's just not acceptable."

Erato said the American Biker Party would be marketed to motorcycle clubs throughout the United States. He said bikers in Wisconsin share many of the same concerns as bikers elsewhere.

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### Big Dog Turns 10

Big Dog Motorcycles is celebrating their tenth year of operating this summer at the company's headquarters in Wichita, Kansas. The celebration, aptly named "Ten Years, One Party," will be held June 11-12 and is designed to appeal to the nation's Big Dog Motorcycle riders, motorcycling enthusiasts, or anyone interested in the high performance, custom cruiser industry. "So far, our tenth year has seen our 10,000th bike roll of the production line, record shipments, the naming of another Big Dog Motorcycles branded dealership, engineering department growth, and extensive factory expansions. No doubt there are many reasons to ride in, get together, and have a party," stated Nick Messer, company president. "So we are doing just that."

The festivities will include a custom bike show, factory tours, calendar girl contest, swap meet, and a trials demonstration. On display will be the first Big Dog Motorcycle, a 1994 Vintage Classic called Old Smokey which was built in the founder's garage just a few miles away from the factory; the 5,000th bike - a 2003 Chopper; and the most recent commemorative bike, a 2004 Ridgeback, representing Big Dog Motorcycles' 10,000th. In addition, Big Dog Motorcycles will award the longest ride, oldest bike, most miles on a bike, and the like. Celebrity riders are also expected to make appearances.

Partygoers will enjoy music by Dewy & The Big Dogs. Dewy is company founder and CEO, Sheldon Coleman, and his band has been playing classic rock in the Wichita area for over twenty years. Big Dog Motorcycles was named after the band, one of Wichita's top party bands.

"The gathering is our way of thanking over ten thousand riders, over three hundred employees, nearly a hundred dealers, and numerous vendors, friends, and community leaders for being part of our history," said Coleman. "All of us feel privileged and proud to be associated with so many people who have put Big Dog Motorcycles firmly in place where it is today - the Number Two American V-Twin motorcycle manufacturer who has truly, and finally, attained OEM status," he continued. Attendees can find specific information about the event, including event schedule, area maps and hotel recommendations on-line at [www.bigdogmotorcycles.com](http://www.bigdogmotorcycles.com) or at their local dealer.

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