

New Non-Profit Awards First Harley To Disabled Wisconsin Veteran

by Audra Thompson, Co-Founder

Hogs For Heroes, started in 2015, has a simple mission: we raise funds to purchase Harleys for Wisconsin Veteran riders injured during the course of active duty, in an effort to enhance their healing and readjustment with a different form of therapy: that of The Road. We believe the freedom of the road, the collegiality of riders and the pride and peace found in ownership can support the healing for those Veterans who have long enjoyed the passion for riding and now find themselves without means to do so.

One Bike a time. One Hero at a time. That is both our motto and approach. After only six months of fundraising, we had cash for the Bike and began looking for the Hero. Using a defined set of criteria and an involved application process, we began seeking applicants in early 2016. News successfully traveled the state and candidates came from all over. Our Advisory Board reviewed the applications and chose one from the many deserving, arguably the hardest part of the work we've done.

There are many honorable causes and obvious community needs to support, but we wanted to make a large, impactful difference in a small number of lives rather than a slight difference across many. There is no right or wrong cause here, we are simply different in our approach to help. Focusing on Wisconsin Veterans allows us to take care of our own. And this spring we did just that: making a HUGE difference in the life of a Marine Corp Veteran, Retired Lance Corporal Scott Kruchten, our first recipient.

In 2003, Scott was 28 years old. He lived comfortably with a great job, he owned a home, a Harley and a Ducati. Still reeling from 9/11 and looking for his next challenge in life, he set his sights on serving our country and entered the Marine Corps. As a Reservist, he immediately found himself promoted, trained as an Assaultman, and deployed to Iraq. In 2004, after completing patrol in turbulent Lutifiyah, Scott, the vehicle commander of the last Humvee in a group of 8, gave the thumbs up to proceed. After all other vehicles had safely passed the same strip, an IED was remotely detonated under Scott's vehicle, killing 4 of the 5 Marines inside. Three of the five killed were from Wisconsin, and the fourth Wisconsinite, Scott, was the lone survivor and left to fight through years of surgeries, procedures, extensive rehabilitation and neuropsychological therapy. A Purple Heart recipient, he's shared his story openly over the years, and volunteered many hours, believing his role in surviving was to educate, support and inspire others in need.

Scott's love for motorcycles started at an early age; he was 13 when his mom taught him how to ride. He bought his first Harley at the age of 18 and sold his last a year after his injury when he was told he'd never ride again and needed the money. His "best job ever" was at Sauk Prairie Harley-Davidson prior to deployment; unfortunately, his return with extensive injuries impacted his ability to continue in the role. Determined to face his challenges he worked hard to physically overcome and not let his attackers have all five of them. Determined to be back on the road, he's been borrowing bikes from family and friends just to have the feel of the road again. Determined to put his family's financial needs first, he has forgone purchasing a motorcycle but has never let go of his "someday" dream. Hogs For Heroes determined that "someday" is NOW for Scott.

Scott, his wife Amy and her son Jacob live in Sun Prairie, WI with their two rescue dogs. Scott works for the State of Wisconsin as an HVAC Specialist. While they now own a home and can make ends meet, the past continues to haunt their financial security and leaves little else for discretionary funds. To reconnect Scott with a life-long joy he could no longer afford, we took him shopping on April 23, 2016 for his "someday" dream.

What you choose to ride is a personal expression and one size does not fit all. That is why we let the Veteran choose their new Harley, up to a set financial limit. We plan on purchasing new, but if our Veteran walks in and finds a preowned beauty on the floor they want, we are good with that, too. Our intent is to partner with the Veteran's area Harley-Davidson dealership to purchase the bike. In Scott's case, it was an easy decision to work with his former employer, Sauk Prairie Harley-Davidson. SPHD jumped at the chance to work with Hogs For Heroes to honor one of their own and generously worked out an especially sweet deal just for him. Scott chose a preowned 2016 FLTRXS Road Glide Special with only 350 miles on it. And like any other owner, Scott immediately added accessories to make that bike his own.

Scott was presented with his keys at Middleton's Quaker Steak and Lube during their May 4, 2016 Summer Bike Night--an awesome party venue. The place was PACKED for a presentation that was filled with respect, emotion and gratitude. The band rocked the crowd and people enjoyed themselves, celebrating life and liberties so easily taken for granted.

While Scott is the first Veteran Hero we have been able to honor thus far, we are pleased to say we have a solid



start on the next bike. Donations "fuel" our next gifting, and it is important you know that every dollar donated for the bike goes straight to the bike and next Veteran in need. To learn more about us, our first Veteran Hero, or how you can support our efforts, please visit our website: www.hogs-forheroeswi.org



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1 Samuel 16:7, James 2: 1-4

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