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14TH ANNUAL “TIM DOLLARD MEMORIAL RIDE” TO BRING THE SPIRIT OF THE HOLIDAYS TO YOUTH AT ADMH’S PSYCHIATRIC ADOLESCENT UNIT AT EAMC

MONTGOMERY– For the fourteenth year in a row, members of the Heart of Dixie Harley Owners Group-Pelham Chapter gear up to brighten the holidays for teens and children committed to the Alabama Department of Mental Health’s (ADMH) Psychiatric Adolescent Unit at the East Alabama Medical Center (EAMC) in Opelika.

The annual ride combines the excitement of gifts and fellowship with the thrill of a motorcycle ride. On Saturday, December 9th, a caravan of Harley-Davidson motorcyclists will leave the Pelham dealership at 9:30 a.m., arriving at the ADMH unit at EAMC around 11:30 am to visit and distribute gifts which they have collected and wrapped.

“It is heartwarming to see the dedication of these riders. We are thankful to them, now and over the last 14 years, for giving their hearts, offering their time and putting a smile on the face of a child who needs love and understanding every day, but especially during the holiday season,” said Commissioner Lynn Beshear, Alabama Department of Mental Health.

Due to the severity of their mental illness, these adolescents will spend the holidays in the hospital. The unit at EAMC serves adolescents committed to the ADMH statewide and has the capacity to serve up to 10 adolescents. The ride is a partnership between the Alabama Department of Mental Health’s Division of Mental Health and Substance Abuse Services, JBS Mental Health in Birmingham, the Heart of Dixie Harley Owners Group and EAMC.

The dedicated group of Harley riders has consistently taken time to help ensure the youth have a special Christmas. The members not only donate gifts to the youth but have also chosen to spend the afternoon with the kids. The riders and kids share a meal and sing carols together. The generosity of both tangible gifts and the intangible gift of their time, along with the joy and excitement it brings to the children, truly exemplifies the spirit of the season.

Chris Ruff, Past Director of the Heart of Dixie Harley Owners Group, shared, “We hope that our visit helps them feel some of the holiday spirit, and know that people do care about them. It’s a humbling experience for us and a blessing for all. It is our pleasure and a privilege to contribute something these children look forward to. The kids put on a show for us with singing and dance routines. They also have lunch with us. We get to sit down, visit and talk with them.”

The ride was initiated by Tim Dollard, past Director of Children's Services at JBS Mental Health. He was a charter member of the Heart of Dixie Harley Owners Group and wanted to find a way to ensure those adolescents in the state psychiatric hospital had a wonderful Christmas. Tim passed away in 2016 but the HOG members have continued the ride for the youth.

Ruff said, "We honor the memory of our late member Tim Dollard, who originally organized this ride. His heart was always thinking of the children. This is the 14th year the Heart of Dixie Harley Owners Group has participated in the annual ride to bring Christmas to the children in the care of the State."

Press Information:

- Contacts: Gayla Caddell, 334-324-1557, Malissa Valdes-Hubert 334-750-0276
- Location is East Alabama Medical Center, 2000 Pepperell Parkway, Opelika, AL 36801
 - Riders will arrive at approximately 11:30 a.m.
- **Press will be allowed to accompany the riders and staff to the administrative office only**
- Check in at the information desk in the lobby and state you are there for the Harley Ride presentation
- **Cameras may be used in front of the hospital as the riders approach the facility**
- **Bikers and gifts may be photographed**

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