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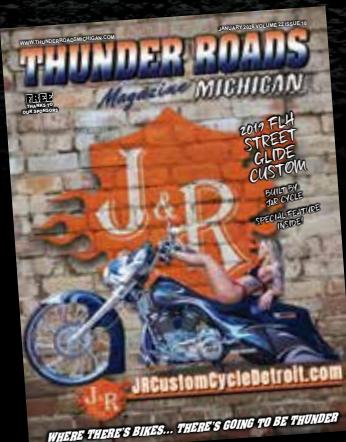
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ON THE COVER
2019 FLH STREET GLIDE CUSTOM
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SEE PAGES 8-9

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MICHIGAN Magazine

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LETTER FROM THE OWNERS

Celebrating an Amazing 2025 & Revving Up for 2026!

What a ride it has been! As we look in the rearview mirror at 2025, we are absolutely blown away by the year we've shared with all of you. From the adrenaline of raffling off a Harley to a jam-packed summer of bike nights, rallies, and events across the beautiful state of Michigan, it has been nothing short of legendary.

We want to say this loud and clear:

We couldn't have done it without you!

To our readers, advertisers, sponsors, tireless staff, and incredible volunteers... seriously, thank you. You are the fuel in our tank.

Looking ahead to 2026, we are hitting the road throttle wide open once again. But we also want to speak from the heart. We know that many are struggling right now, and we want you to know that we are right there with you. We are a family in this industry. When our advertisers struggle, our business struggles, and our personal lives feel that weight, too. We are just as you are.

That is why we are so incredibly grateful. To those who gave us support last season and to those who have stuck with us all the way through the ups and downs this winter. Thank you. Your loyalty means the world to us.

We're Growing our Crew—And We Want You!

As we shift gears into the new year, we are adding more rockstar account representatives to the team to take *Thunder Roads Michigan* even further. We have been lucky to surround ourselves with amazing people as we continue to grow, but we can always use more help.

If you've had the chance to say hello at one of the events we hosted, co-hosted, or attended, you already know the deal: We like to have fun and, occasionally, call it work.

Do you think you'd like to join in on the action? If you want to get involved with everything to do with motorcycles in Michigan, what are you waiting for?

We are looking for:

- **Event Staff & Volunteers:** Especially for our charity events!
- **Photographers:** Are you good with a camera?
- **Account Representatives:** Does earning some cash while riding your motorcycle sound like fun to you?

Why not make money while doing what you love?

Get yourself a jumpstart on an opportunity before the riding season is here. Heck, depending on the event, there's a good chance you'll even get paid for volunteering.

How to Reach Us:

- Shoot us a message on **Facebook Messenger**.
- Submit a contact request on our website: thunderroadsmichigan.com.
- Email us directly at info@thunderroadsmichigan.com and tell us about yourself!

The Road Ahead

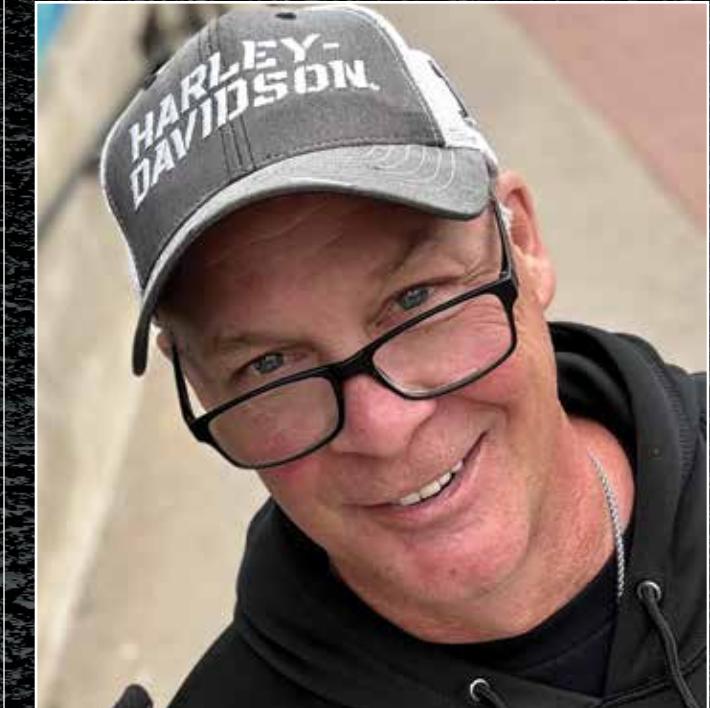
We are coming into our fourth year as the latest owners of *Thunder Roads Michigan Magazine*, and let us tell you, it is still just as exciting as the first day we picked up the keys. Come aboard and share the excitement with us!

To our advertisers: We are promising you right now that we are working extra hard to make 2026 your best year yet. To our readers: Get ready for more noise, more rides, and more memories.

Thank you for an absolutely amazing 2025. Let's make the new year the best one yet. See you on Michigan's Thunder Roads,

- RJ & Aly

RICK MILLER INTRO



What's up! I'm Rick Miller, and I've been riding bikes since I was 5 years old. I started (like most of my generation) on a steel frame with a pull-start Briggs and Stratton fence smasher. Eventually, I got into motocross racing in the AMA District 14 Michigan circuit.

For years, I ran my own demolition company, which was a lot of fun until Jody and I found Heavy Metal Jewelry. Now, I'm the Director of Commercial Sales for Heavy Metal Jewelry, which you may know from local Michigan rallies and bike nights. But selling retail is just a tiny part of our business. We mainly wholesale to Harley-Davidson dealerships nationwide. We also supply independent bike shops, leather outlets, and rally vendors across the country.

In my capacity with Heavy Metal Jewelry I have traveled to most of the great biker spots such as Daytona Bike Week, Myrtle Beach and the Outer Banks of the Carolinas, the Smoky and Blue Ridge Mountains, the Ozarks and Arizona all with our toy hauler and the bikes in the back, along with my beloved and the president of Heavy Metal Jewelry, Jody Ballor, and our dog Charlie. We love meeting so many great people from all over the country and look forward to meeting you soon if we haven't already.

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CHAPLAIN CHARLIES CORNER: NEW YEAR, SAME ROAD – JUST RIDE IT BETTER

BY CHAPLAIN CHARLIE

January in Mid-Michigan isn't exactly postcard season, but it has its own kind of charm. The roads around Sanford get quieter. The air feels cleaner. Traffic thins out. And even if the bike is parked more than we'd like, every rider knows this season well. It's the season of anticipation.

January isn't about riding less. It's about thinking about riding more.

It's the time of year when you catch yourself daydreaming at stoplights or staring out the window. Wondering where the first long ride will be. Which buddies you haven't ridden with in too long? What back road you didn't quite finish exploring last year? Winter doesn't kill the joy. It sharpens it.

Every new year, the world starts yelling about resolutions. New year. New you. New habits. New everything. But riders tend to approach January a little differently. Most of us aren't interested in becoming someone else. We're interested in riding better. Same bike. Same road. Same life. Just smoother lines, fewer mistakes, and more enjoyment along the way.

When you roll through Sanford or out across the familiar Mid-Michigan roads, you don't expect the pavement to magically change just because the calendar flipped. The curves are still there. The straightaways still stretch on. The scenery still feels like home. What changes isn't the road. It's how you ride it.

That's true in life, too.

Riders understand something that applies far beyond motorcycles. You don't ditch a good bike because you had a rough season. You don't quit riding because you hit some weather or took a wrong turn. You learn. You laugh about it later. You ride smarter next time.

The Bible talks about renewal in a way that feels surprisingly familiar to riders. "If anyone is in Christ, the new creation has come: The old has gone, the new is here!" (2 Corinthians 5:17, NIV). That doesn't mean your past disappears. It means it gets redeemed. God doesn't pretend the miles didn't happen. He makes them count.

Last year gave all of us plenty of miles. Some were fantastic. Some were challenging. Some were the kind you still shake your head about. But every mile added something. Experience. Patience. Perspective. Or at the very least, a good story to tell over coffee.

January is a great time to enjoy those stories without beating yourself up over them. Riders are good at that. We swap tales, laugh at ourselves, and somehow turn mistakes into memories. Life works better when you treat it the same way.

This time of year is perfect for a mental tune-up. Not a teardown. Just a tune-up.

Anyone can cruise on autopilot. Same routes. Same reactions. Same habits. But good riders stay engaged. They read the road. They anticipate what's ahead. They enjoy the ride instead of rushing through it. Scripture puts it simply and practically: "Be very careful, then, how you live—not as unwise but as wise, making the most of every opportunity." (Ephesians 5:15-16, NIV). Wisdom isn't stiff or serious. It's knowing how to enjoy the ride without wrecking the bike.

Mid-Michigan understands that balance well. Winter here doesn't stop life. It just slows it enough to appreciate things. Towns like Sanford keep moving. Neighbors keep helping neighbors. Rivers keep flowing under the ice. And riders keep planning, dreaming, and counting the days until the next good stretch of pavement.

That's part of the fun. Anticipation is fuel.

January reminds us that good things are ahead. Warmer days. Open roads. First rides that feel like freedom all over again. You don't have to rush it. You just have to stay ready.

So maybe this year doesn't need a long list of promises you'll forget by February. Maybe it just needs a better attitude when the road throws a curve. Ride calmer. Laugh louder. Let things go quicker. Appreciate the scenery, even when it's familiar. And don't miss the joy of the ride because you're too busy replaying last year's potholes.

January isn't here to judge you. It's here to invite you.

Invite you to enjoy the ride a little more. Invite you to ride with gratitude instead of pressure. Invite you to trust that the road ahead still has plenty of good miles left.

And if you ever wonder whether you're riding into this new year alone, there's a promise worth remembering: "The Lord himself goes before you and will be with you; he will never leave you nor forsake you." (Deuteronomy 31:8, NIV).

Same road. Same rider. Same God.

Just a fresh year full of possibilities, laughter, open highways, and stories waiting to be told.

So take a deep breath, enjoy the anticipation, and ride into this new year with a smile on your face and hope in your heart.

Until our next journey in Chaplain's Corner, ride safe, and may God's blessings guide you on every road you choose.

Happy 2026!

Chaplain Charlie
Chaplain Dean Titus (Charlie)
Sanford American
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YEAH, OR MEH?



Eagle Lights Flashing Strobe Squareback LED Tail Brake Light Kit

SKU: 8900TL6-R

BY BIG E - MID MICHIGAN BIKER PODCAST

Rating: ★★★★ (5 out of 5 Stars)

When you spend as much time riding sweep as I do, being seen from behind isn't just important — it's non-negotiable. Tail gunners rely on visibility more than anyone in the pack, and that's exactly why I put the Eagle Lights Flashing Strobe Squareback LED Tail Brake Light Kit to the test on my Harley-Davidson.

Installation: Couldn't Be Easier

Let's start with the best part: two screws. That's literally all it takes.

Pull the old assembly off, plug in the new one, tighten everything back up, and you're done. No wiring harness puzzles. No load resistors. No headaches. This is as pure plug-and-play as it gets — even for riders who aren't big into wrenching.

Looks Stock — Performs Like Anything But

Once installed, the unit keeps the classic, clean OEM "square back" look.

If you didn't know it was aftermarket, you wouldn't guess it. It blends perfectly with factory styling.

But the second you touch the brakes? Whole different story.

Brightness & Safety: A Serious Upgrade

This Light Is Super Bright — a massive improvement over the stock taillight. And the built-in flashing strobe pattern is where the real safety benefit shines. It fires off a few quick flashes before going steady, grabbing attention instantly.

As someone who frequently rides tail gunner, that flashing feature is a game changer. It dramatically increases visibility, especially in traffic and low-light conditions. Simply put:

- Drivers behind you can't miss it.
- More Options for More Bikes

Another bonus: Eagle Lights offers a wide selection of LED options for Harley-Davidson and many other motorcycles. So even if this exact Squareback unit isn't your fitment, they've likely got one that is.

Discount (Podcast Listeners — and Now You)

Eagle Lights has a special discount available for listeners of The **Mid Michigan Biker Podcast**, and I'm passing it along to Thunder Roads Michigan Magazine readers as well.

Use code **MIDMICHIGANBIKER** at checkout and save a little cash while upgrading your visibility.

Final Verdict

The Eagle Lights Flashing Strobe Squareback LED Tail Brake Light Kit earns a full **5 stars** for its ultra-easy installation, stock appearance, intense brightness, and safety-first strobe effect. For riders who care about being seen — especially from behind — it's one of the best quick upgrades you can make.

Life is short bikers, so get after it.



MID MICHIGAN BIKER PODCAST



FEATURED BIKE

2019 FLH STREET GLIDE CUSTOM 124CI STAGE IV

J&R Cycle of Detroit, MI pulled out all the stops for this 2019 FLH Street Glide Custom 124CI Stage IV Build. This is a complete rebuild from the frame out. Check out all the bells and whistles below.

- Paint color: 9 color custom paint job
- Dirty Air fast air with handlebar controls & MRI center stand
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- DB Drive 1.0" Xpert Phenolic Neo tweeter
- DB Drive 1500 AMP and DB Drive 3200W AMP
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- 880 AMP Restart



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'TIS THE SEASON



RJ, MYSELF, AND TYLER - DECEMBER 2025

You heard it once, you heard it twice, Santa was going to check to see if you were naughty or nice. The year has closed but the holiday season continues to bring us gifts of snow and pot-holed riddled roads. Last year, I remember riding on Christmas and New Years Day. Old man winter had a whole new mindset in December 2025 for sure. While a little disappointed, it is also a mandated time to rest and rejuvenate for 2026.

Everything is a little different, days and days of snow, guess its times like these to lay low. Went hunting a few times, planning to do some snowmobiling, but this year, I cannot think of one thing I want to do to my sled. As the old saying goes, if it is not broke don't fix it. But seriously, I considered going for more horsepower on my road bike, then I thought about fuel mileage. As my mind races and my veins fills with oil, I believe in one saying...boys and their toys.

Just like women and purses, machinery is one thing men can never get enough of. Whether it is another bike, car, or something to tinker on, one thing for sure, is the love for horsepower is never gone.

2026 is going to be a great year. We are lining up some of the OG's of our lifestyle to share their stories with us. Sharing their perspectives and some of their challenges while on the road. What they learned from being broke down on the side of the highway, to the friendships they have made due to being in duress. Maybe we can get them to share their feelings and thoughts on some of the differences in times between "then and now." And most importantly, what is keeping them rolling on those two wheels. December brought the opportunity

share a few cold ones with the publisher of TRM, RJ and his sidekick for the day Tyler. Man, a good time was had and the stories kept coming with the drink and appetizers. It was a night for sure!

It is sometimes hard to come up with new content each month, but what I have learned is my passion will always push through and that is what keeps me eager to share these stories. I will start writing 6 of 12 months for '26; that will allow me to interview the chosen feature, write the article, allow time for approval of the content, and finally submission to the Thunder Roads Michigan Family. (TRM) It's a process that takes time to perfect. So, in closing, I'd like to say Happy New Year to all!

Keep those wheels turnin' and those cigars burnin',

Smoke

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VETERANS CORNER



A New Year on the Open Road for Michigan Veteran Motorcycle Riders

As the New Year rolls in, Michigan's veteran motorcycle riders stand ready for another season of freedom, camaraderie, and purpose. For many veterans, the rumble of an engine and the open road offer more than a ride—they represent healing, connection, and the same sense of unity once found in service.

From spring rides along the Great Lakes to charity events and memorial runs across the state, Michigan's veteran riders continue to honor their past while moving forward together.

Motorcycle riding has long been a powerful bond among veterans. Riding together builds trust, strengthens friendships, and creates a shared sense of mission. Whether you ride with a formal motorcycle association, a local veterans group, or a few close friends, the road becomes a place where stories are shared, burdens are lightened, and no one rides alone. Every ride carries meaning. Memorial runs, POW/MIA events, and veteran support rides across Michigan remind us that service does not end when the uniform comes off. Each mile ridden honors those who came before us and supports those still finding their way home.

As the New Year begins, it's a time to recommit to riding with purpose—supporting fellow veterans, raising awareness, and continuing to serve our communities. A new riding season also means preparing both bike and rider. Veterans know the importance of readiness. Taking time to inspect equipment, refresh riding skills, and ride responsibly helps ensure everyone makes it home safe. Looking out for one another on the road reflects the same values learned in service—discipline, accountability, and teamwork.

For many veterans, riding is therapy. The focus, control, and freedom found on two wheels can ease stress and restore balance. Michigan offers countless scenic routes that provide a chance to clear the mind, reconnect with nature, and find peace beyond everyday challenges.

Rolling Forward Together

As the New Year unfolds, Michigan's veteran motorcycle riders continue to lead with pride, respect, and unity. May this year bring smooth roads, safe rides, strong engines, and even stronger bonds. Ride proud. Ride safe. And remember—no matter the miles ahead, you never ride alone.

Here's to a New Year of brotherhood, healing, and open roads for Michigan's veteran riders. Have a very Blessed New Year!!!

Sharon K Harvey, USAF (Retired)



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TRM EXCLUSIVE: *Bikes on the Bricks Delivers Donations at Security Credit Union*

BY RJ, THUNDER ROADS MICHIGAN MAGAZINE

It was a true privilege to attend and cover the official handing off of the charitable donation checks on December 2, 2025, an event that perfectly highlights the powerful community impact of **Bikes on the Bricks**. The ceremony, fittingly presented by the event's largest and most loyal supporter, **Security Credit Union**, saw funds from the 18th Annual Bikes on the Bricks distributed to three key local organizations.

The dedication of the Bikes on the Bricks promoters was on full display as substantial checks were presented to three charities that have long been close to their hearts and those of Security Credit Union. The following groups each received a donation:

- MI-C.O.P.S.
- Old Newsboys of Flint
- My Brothers Keeper of Genesee



PICTURED FROM LEFT TO RIGHT: CHRIS, JAY (CEO, SECURITY C.U.), STEVE (VP, MI COPS), THOMAS (TREASURER, MI COPS), KIRK, AND BILL

While the organization has supported many other charities in the area over the years, these three have remained central to the event's charitable mission since its origination.

The Powerhouse Behind the Bricks

The continued success and impressive charitable reach of the Bikes on the Bricks event are driven by a dedicated leadership team. Kirk Bowles, one of the event's original founders, now serves as its acting President, Chris Everson, a well-known Flint personality, is the champion of logistics, and Bill Bailey, General Manager at FOX 103.9 in Flint, serves as a crucial sponsor and promoter making the event a



PICTURED FROM LEFT TO RIGHT: SHERRY (SECRETARY, BOTB), CHRIS, JAY (CEO, SECURITY C.U.), TONY (EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR, OLD NEWSBOYS FLINT), KIRK, AND BILL



PICTURED FROM LEFT TO RIGHT: CHRIS, JAY (CEO, SECURITY C.U.), JAMES (EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR, MY BROTHER'S KEEPER OF GENESEE), KIRK, AND BILL

continued success. This committed team carries forward a tradition that began with humble, but heartfelt, roots.

Bikes on the Bricks, which takes place traditionally in September, has become one of the largest motorcycle events in the entire state of Michigan, drawing thousands of enthusiasts annually. The organization's ability to consistently raise funds for charity stems from its dramatic growth and highly successful major events:

The Police Escorted Charity Ride: The event's official kick-off is the annual Saturday ride-in, which has boasted upwards of 700 riders. The proceeds from this police-escorted ride are proudly donated to Genesee County charitable organizations. Vehicle City Harley-Davidson is a

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SEPTEMBER 11, 12, 13, 2026

19th Annual FLINT VEHICLE CITY BIKES ON THE BRICKS Founded 2007 FLINT, MICHIGAN

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major sponsor and traditionally hosts this charity ride from their dealership each year.

Premier Multi-Day Event: Bikes on the Bricks has grown from a cold, rainy, one-day start in October 2007 (when approximately 100 motorcycle diehards showed up) to a premier three-day bike event with thousands and thousands of riders. It features bike shows, a biker fashion show, vendors, stunt shows, special guests, live music, and of course the staple of the weekend, the police skills competition that brings competitors from around Michigan, out of state, and even from our neighbors in Canada.

The event has attracted notable Michigan celebrities like musician Mark Farner and notable custom bike builder Ron Finch, and even Erik Estrada from the classic TV show *CHiPs*.

The current leaders are focused on even more growth, noting that while they've come far, they are always looking for more sponsors, vendors, and volunteers, because "It's all for charity".

Looking ahead to 2026, which will mark the 19th Annual (would mark the 20th if not for COVID) event, the organizers are excited about the future and are hoping to expand the event even further.

Want to be part of the continued success and support this incredible charitable mission in 2026? Please reach out to the organizers:

Kirk Bowles: ForestCycleWorks@gmail.com

Bill Bailey: BBailey@classicfox.com

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THUNDER ROADS® MICHIGAN MAGAZINE JANUARY 2026 13



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45th Annual MOTORCYCLE SWAP MEET

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Saturday Vendor Setup: 12pm - 6pm
MORE INFORMATION: 260-223-1409
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- SUNDAY, FEBRUARY 15TH**
LIMA, OH
- SUNDAY, FEBRUARY 22ND**
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GREETINGS FROM ABATE OF MICHIGAN!

Good day to all our riders! There are a lot of exciting new happenings at the state level, and we want to make sure you are in the loop.

New Regional Map & Leadership

We have launched a **new regional map** designed to help our members find meetings closer to home. We want to make it easier to attend, though we hope you still have a nice, scenic ride to get there even though it's in a car this time of year!

In the list below, you will see the breakdown of regions, the counties included, and your specific **Regional Coordinator (RC)**.

- **What is an RC?** They lead the meetings, answer your questions, and ensure members know exactly what is going on.
- **State Leadership:** Our RCs meet monthly with our Operations Officer, **David (Woody) Berg**, to discuss reports and address any issues. In our humble opinion, Woody is absolutely rocking the job!

Contact Woody: 231-884-2192

Looking Ahead: 2026 & Beyond

Keep your eyes on ABATE in January! After our seminar, we will be rolling out some new bylaws and announcing new RCs. We are working hard to make **2026—our 50th Anniversary—our best year yet.**

Join the Movement

If you haven't joined yet, now is the perfect time. We are a community fighting for your rights.

- **Family Coverage:** You can now sign up your kids and receive \$3,500 in accidental life and dismemberment insurance.
- **Supporting Members:** Businesses, clubs, and individuals are all welcome to become supporting members. Come for the motorcycle rights, stay for the great folks to ride with!

Visit us 24/7 (Rain or Shine!): www.abateofmichigan.org

Are you interested in joining the fight for Motorcycle Rights?
Where is your Region?

Region 1) Keweenaw, Baraga, Iron, Ontonagon, Gogebic, Houghton

Region 2) Schoolcraft, Luce, Chippewa, Mackinac

Region 3) Antrim, Kalkaska, Charlevoix

Region 4) Emmet, Cheboygan, Presque Isle

Region 5) Mason, Lake Oceana, Muskegon, Newaygo

Region 6) Gladwin, Arenac, Midland, Bay

Region 7) Huron, Tuscola, Sanilac

Region 8) Ottawa, Kent, Allegan, Barry

Region 9) Ionia, Clinton, Eaton, Ingham

Region 10) Gratiot, Saginaw

Region 11) Lapeer, St. Clair, Macomb

Region 12) Van Buren, Kalamazoo, Berrien, Cass, St. Joseph

Region 13) Calhoun, Jackson, Branch, Hillsdale

Region 14) Livingston, Washtenaw

Region 15) Wayne

Region 16) Oscoda, Ogemaw, Alcona, Iosco, Montmorency, Alpena

Region 17) Marquette, Dickinson, Menominee, Delta, Alger

Region 18) Lenawee, Monroe

Region 19) Oakland

Region 20) Genesee, Shiawassee

Region 21) Oscoda, Clare, Mecosta, Isabella, Montcalm

Region 22) Grand Traverse, Leelanau, Benzie, Manistee, Wexford

Region 23) Otsego, Crawford, Roscommon, Missaukee,

Scan the code
for meeting
and contact
info.



*Thanks again,
Merry S. Garrett
Proud lifetime member of ABATE
Board Member, State Events Chair, RC
Region 6 (covering Gladwin, Midland,
Bay City and Arenac counties)*

REGIONAL DIRECTORY

Find your county below to identify your Region and contact your Coordinator.

Region	Counties Included	Regional Coordinator (RC)	Phone Number
Region 1	Keweenaw, Baraga, Iron, Ontonagon, Gogebic, Houghton	Todd Włoszczynski	906-250-9303
Region 2	Schoolcraft, Luce, Chippewa, Mackinac	Bernie Winicki	906-287-5706
Region 3	Antrim, Kalkaska, Charlevoix	Van Dunson	231-676-0760
Region 4	Emmet, Charlevoix, Cheboygan	Dave Etherton	231-818-5277
Region 5	Mason, Lake, Oceana, Muskegon, Newaygo	Dan "Tiny" Patterson	231-923-6906
Region 6	Gladwin, Arenac, Midland, Bay	Merry Garrett	734-652-9739
Region 7	Huron, Tuscola, Sanilac	Tim Polk	989-670-9976
Region 8	Ottawa, Kent, Allegan, Barry	Tara Hender	616-589-1551
Region 9	Ionia, Clinton, Eaton, Ingham	Nick Henry	517-647-6623
Region 10	Gratiot, Saginaw	Vern Shock	810-922-1168
Region 11	Lapeer, St. Clair, Macomb	Arnold Schneider	810-334-8600
Region 12	Van Buren, Kalamazoo, Berrien, Cass, St. Joseph	Eric Eads	269-435-2058
Region 13	Calhoun, Jackson, Branch, Hillsdale	Dan "Dano" Kenzie	517-414-8183
Region 14	Livingston, Washtenaw	Shiny Bob	734-417-1369
Region 15	Wayne	Shiny Bob (<i>Interim</i>)	734-417-1369
Region 16	Oscoda, Ogemaw, Alcona, Iosco	Jesse Gordy	734-957-6033
Region 17	Marquette, Dickinson, Menominee, Delta, Alger	TBD	N/A
Region 18	Lenawee, Monroe	Leroy Cuykendall III	734-755-3684
Region 19	Oakland	Bill Stewart	248-802-7221
Region 20	Genesee, Shiawassee	Steve Graves (General)	810-471-5588
Region 21	Osceola, Clare, Mecosta, Isabella, Montcalm	Vern Shock Jr.	810-922-1168
Region 22	Grand Traverse, Leelanau, Benzie, Manistee, Wexford	Greg Bennett	321-260-6243
Region 23	Otsego, Crawford, Roscommon, Missaukee	Ted Caleb	586-216-4971

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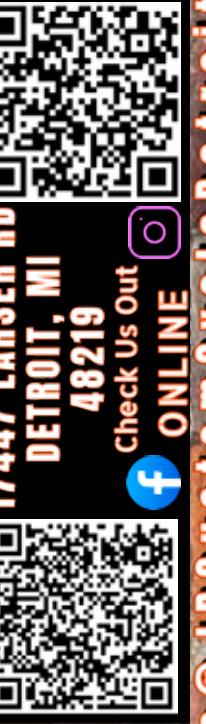
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JANUARY 2026

SUNDAY	MONDAY	TUESDAY	WEDNESDAY	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY
28	29	30	31	1	2	3
4	5	6	7	8	9	10
11	12	13	14	15	16	17
18	19	20	21	22	23	24
25	26	27	28	29	30	31

THUNDER CYCLE

Happy New Year

30th Annual Motorcycle Swap Meet
Marion County Fairgrounds

MLK Day

ABATE Seminar
Four Points by Sheraton- Saginaw

2026 D14 State Championship Series Round 3
Port Huron M/C

Two Wheel Takeaway with RJ



Your Ride Starts Here

First things first. I would like to address how dang dark the December issue was printed. It threw off some blues and other hues in the mag and made it difficult to read the detailed specs on last month's Two Wheel Takeaway and get a clear view of the pics. Apologies. I'd like to mention if you are curious to see them side by side, you can always check them out in our digital copy online at www.thunderroadsmichigan.com.

December's introductory pages of Two Wheel Takeaway shared some news from the Indian Motorcycle camp about the 2026 Scout the lineup with a couple of sportier versions: the **Sport Scout RT** and the smaller **Sport Scout Sixty**.

The idea of the Two Wheel Takeaway was created for a few reasons. First of all, for the love of all motorcycles. Like most, my first bike wasn't a Harley-Davidson. I owned a lot of different bikes before buying my first Street Glide off the showroom floor. It was a good learning curve, and I got to know a little about a lot I guess. It's fun talking about bikes. Secondly, that curiosity never really went away. In my time spent with the Motor Company; it was part of the job to know what the competitors were pushing. In this case, it was the only "new" model that Indian was offering for 2026. And really, it's not really new... more of an upgrade of what they already offer. Oh, now there are nine versions of the Scout to consider, but it basically comes down to whether you want the 1250cc or the 999cc model. So, now that we got that out of the way, the third reason. I own a motorcycle magazine! It kind of ties in the first two reasons above with the latter. We need content, and fair, non-biased content. I know that a majority of our readers and followers ride Hogs, including me. I also know that there is a decent percentage of you out there riding other brands and prefer them. We get asked at least a time or two each month "why don't you ever talk about Indians, Hondas, or the many other bikes? We've heard ya... and that's what we are trying to do. We aren't pushing one make over the other but just sharing the facts and maybe a little personal experience if I have it to give. So, I started with the "apples to apples" approach and started with American V-twins. Plus, the RT seemed to have a little buzz around it being the only new model for 2026 from Indian and obviously H-D has an answer for them, but I didn't think it would be fair to put

the RT against it.

The answer being the 2026 Harley-Davidson Sportster S. It will literally eat the RT's lunch and beg for it to send out its bigger brother. Big brother being the Scout 101.

So, this month we have two ultimate sport cruisers going head-to-head in this month's Two Wheel Takeaway. Last month, I didn't feel any pressure in the comparisons since they were related, but this time it comes down to more than cost savings and the ability to get us to the local bike night; We have a street fight on our hands.

We're posting up the **101 Scout** in the red corner against something in its V-twin weight category, the 2026 **Harley-Davidson Sportster S**. These two "ultimate sport cruisers" mix traditional cruiser lineage with new looks and feel with modern sporty performance. Let's get into announcing these two fighters and check out the *reach* on these two respected brands. Let's get it on!

2026 Harley-Davidson Sportster S: Sport Cruiser

Base Price: \$15,999

- **Technology:** Cornering Rider Safety Enhancements, 4" TFT Display, Bluetooth connectivity for phone, music and navigation. Ride Modes. All LED lighting.
- **Styling:** Unlike anything else found on the streets (except in a superhero movie) with its standout looks. Familiarity is to only be shared with a completely different model with the same engine platform; the **H-D Pan America**.

We'll get into that beast a little further down the road.

- **Engine:** Set in motion by the **Structural, Liquid Cooled, 1250cc Revolution Max 1250T (1252cc) V-twin**. Boasting **120-121 HP** and **94 lb. ft of torque**. *Actual dyno testing shows numbers averaging around 110 HP.
- **Performance:** The engine is designed as a stressed member of the chassis, reducing weight and improving handling. It offers strong, accessible power across the rev range, not just peak numbers, giving it quick acceleration and exciting performance for city and highway riding.
- **Transmission:** 6-speed with assist/slip clutch, paired with a belt final drive and a gear primary drive.
- **Weight:** In running order, 502 lbs. (47lbs less than the Scout 101)
- **Length:** 89.4 in. with a 30-degree rake and 59.8 in. wheelbase.
- **Warranty:** 2 years, Unlimited miles.

2026 Indian Scout 101: Sport Cruiser

Base Price: \$16,999

- **Technology:** 4" Ride Command Touchscreen with GPS, Ride Stats, Bluetooth connectivity (calls, music), and displays features like weather/traffic, Ride Modes, Traction Control, LED Lighting, and Keyless Ignition.

CONTINUED...



- **Styling:** Appealing blends of aggressive performance with premium finishes. Moto handlebars for an upright and custom stance.
- **Engine:** V-twin 1250cc Liquid-Cooled SpeedPlus motor pushing 111 HP and 82 lbs. of torque. *Stock dyno numbers figure around 99-100 HP
- **Performance:** A potent platform easily surpassing older Scout models and delivering true modern performance and impressive upgrade capabilities to impressively boost its numbers easily. It provides both brisk acceleration and a comfortable cruising position at highway speeds.
- **Transmission:** 6-speed constant mesh gearbox, wet clutch with multi-plate, slipper and assist clutch paired with a belt final drive via the gear drive wet clutch system.
- **Weight:** In running order, 549 lbs.
- **Length:** 86.9 in. with a 29-degree rake and 61.5 in. wheelbase.
- **Warranty:** 2 years, Unlimited miles.

Again, this is *my* Two Wheel Takeaway, and you may or may not agree but try to consider me unbiased by brand and that the facts don't lie. For me, when shopping for a brand new or new to me bike, it isn't always "what's better" or "what would I sacrifice to save on price." It will almost certainly come down to comfort and "if it's worth the extra money." Like I said before, I'm not actively shopping for another motorcycle but maybe if I had the chance I'd clear a corner of the garage just to have another.

My Takeaway

This month's bout between the Scout 101 and the Sportster S is this... Extra Power vs. Power & Comfort.

Both have similar technology built in, but what I've read, the Indian seems to have a bit more ease of use from an electronics side. To me the electronics stuff is cool, but it's not why I would be looking at either of these rides. We're talking about muscle and performance here. Without getting into suspension (Scout 101 suspension is better) and braking, performance is obviously still key for someone looking to buy into that segment. Based on facts, Sportster S is the clear winner based on performance overall. Let's face it, this Harley leaves the garage with aggressive character and promises a punchier, stronger low-end snap. It wins in raw horsepower, torque figures, and design. Point Harley!... but let's not get ahead of ourselves.

They are locked in fierce rivalry, with each focusing on a different aspect of performance. They are closely matched, but with opposing philosophies.

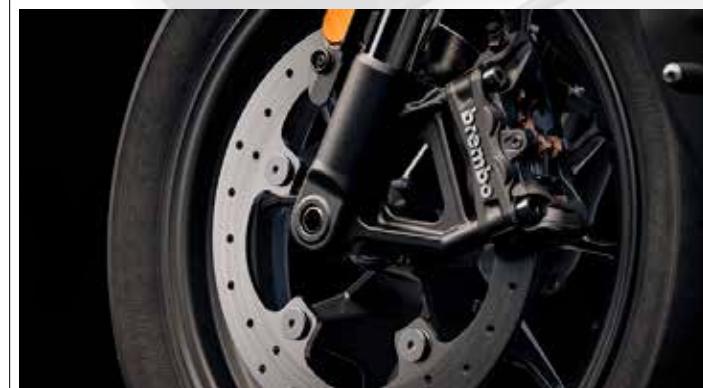
I have barely ridden a Sportster S and haven't ridden a Scout 101 at all, so I couldn't use experience to sway me either way on this TWT. Based on what I've researched, I would have to consider what they were designed to do and for whom. I guess I can say the Sportster S didn't have a 6'

220lb person in mind when they came up with the idea and maybe the Scout 101 didn't exactly either. Still, the Scout 101 is a mire 1.7 in. longer at the wheelbase and the Sportster is actually longer by 2.5 in. overall. The Scout 101 maintains a more classic, yet aggressive cruiser silhouette with a quarter fairing and moto-style handlebars which I find comfortably attractive. But then the Sportster S is visually modern and unique, with its massive front tire, and high-mount exhaust. There's nothing like it.

With the 101's power delivery and offering 6" risers in its upright stance, it sounds like just enough to win one over. Maybe this would help one decide?

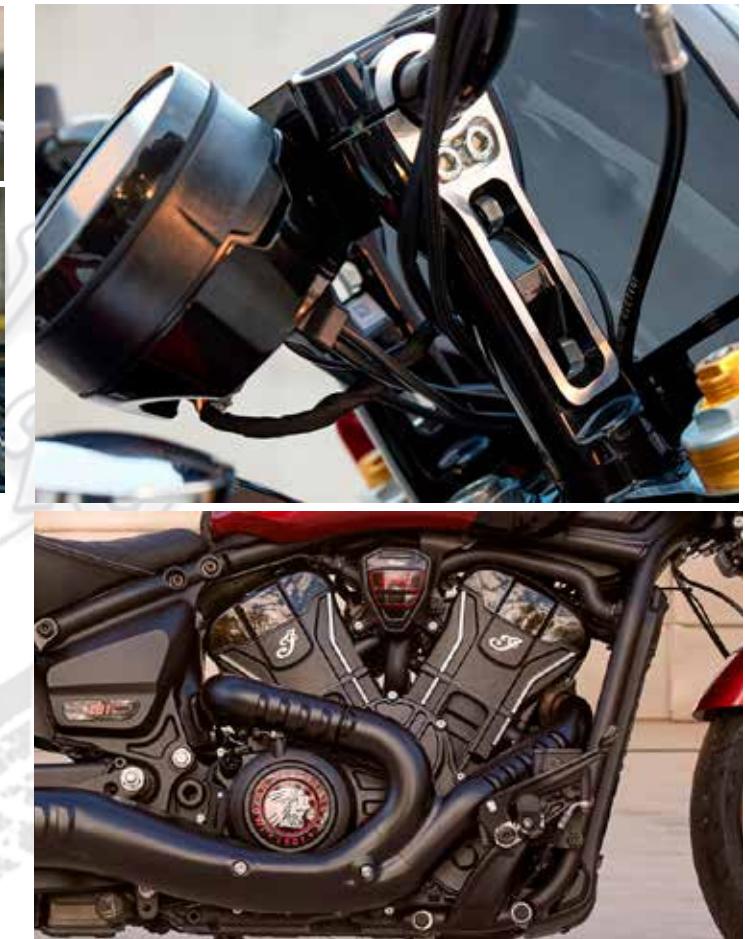
Choose the Harley-Davidson Sportster S if...

- You prioritize maximum raw performance (HP, torque, weight).
- You want standard equipment, advanced safety electronics (C-ABS, C-TCS).
- You are comfortable with a sportier, higher riding position.
- You are planning to add upgrades. (There seems to be a lot of accessory options)
- You like more color options (5 colors for 2026)



Choose the Indian Scout 101 if...

- You prefer a lower seat height, and a slightly more classic cruiser feel.
- You want top-tier adjustable suspension and dual front brakes in the Indian lineup.
- You prefer the traditional V-twin look and feel (despite being liquid cooled).
- You would prefer a factory wind screen.



Still, there can only be one winner. We don't score ties here. This month's Two Wheel Takeaway winner is the Harley-Davidson Sportster S. It's the clear winner based on sheer muscle, design, and purpose of hitting its target for this fast paced market.



If you are shopping in this V-twin segment, hopefully you found this helpful and feel like a more informed buyer. Neither model above would be my singular ride for the type of riding I prefer, but every once in a while, admittedly, we all get the need for speed.

~RJ

Sources: indianmotorcycle.com and harley-davidson.com



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The New Year is officially upon us! As we look forward to 2026, our organization is more committed than ever to the one thing that drives us: helping people right where we are needed most.

Our Mission: Saving Lives and Spreading Awareness

We know all too well that the loss of a friend or family member is devastating. Unfortunately, professional counseling isn't always accessible or affordable for those struggling with grief or mental health battles. We have all seen how these struggles can lead to catastrophic consequences, and we are determined to make a difference.

- **Mental Health Support:** We are incredibly proud of our initiative to supply suicide prevention benches to local high schools. It is our way of offering a tangible sign of hope to students who need it.
- **Motorcycle Safety:** Our "Awareness Champion" is actively teaching Driver's Ed students how to share the road with motorcycles. Since not everyone grows up around bikes, teaching the next generation to understand the biking world is vital. Saving lives is our passion, and we will continue to do our best at every event we attend.

Celebrating Community: The Ida Light Festival & Holidays

We recently wrapped up the Ida Light Festival Parade, and I couldn't be prouder of our team. Despite the cold, we had three motorcycles, our trailer, a golf cart, and walkers handing out candy! The weather was chilly, but sharing hot chocolate, hot dogs, and camaraderie with friends and the community was off the charts.

During the holidays, we were also blessed to donate to other organizations that share our mission. Seeing Santa hand out gifts and making a memorable difference for families in need was a highlight of our year. We hope you were able to create some special holiday memories with your loved ones, too!

From the Garage: Winter Maintenance & The Countdown

I'm sure many of you have your motorcycles hooked up to a trickle charger to keep that battery fresh, just waiting for the first chance to ride. It's that time of year when dreaming about the open road is all we can do—unless you are one of



those brave souls who doesn't mind the freeze. As for me? It ain't happening!

I look at it this way: this is my January Thunder Roads Michigan story, which means we are just two short months away from Spring arriving in March. I hope that thought helps you get through this cold winter we've had!

Looking Ahead: A New Year always brings new challenges, but when you have members like ours, you know you have memories that will last a lifetime and the motivation to keep pushing forward.

Please continue to look out for your friends and family. Check in on them and help whenever you can. We can't always be right, but just trying to help is a wonderful feeling, and God appreciates every bit of good you do.

Stay safe,

**HOT ROD
BEATON**

President / Hot Rods Motorcycle Awareness and Suicide Prevention Foundation

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STORM CHASERS DRINK RECIPE

BLACKTOP BUTTERSCOTCH

- 2 OZ BUTTERSCOTCH SCHNAPPS
- 1 OZ KAHLUA COFFEE LIQUOR
- 4 OZ STRONG BREWED COFFEE
- 1 OZ WARM MILK
- WHIPPED CREAM

Directions:

In your favorite drinking mug, pour the butterscotch schnapps and Kahlua. Add the strong brewed coffee and warm milk, then stir gently to combine. Top generously with whipped cream for a rich finish.

Optional: Garnish with Chocolate shavings or Butterscotch drizzle



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JOKER'S WILD



Me: Hey Bartender!
Let me get three shots of Grey Goose or is it Gray Geese? Fook it, let me get a flock of vodka!

Vegan: You do know that chicken you're eating had a family.
Lil' Bennie: Exactly why I ordered the family bucket - nobody gets left out.

Got a tee from the entire Family for Christmas and have the feeling they're talking behind my back:
Tee read:
Apparently, I'm Still Not Old Enough To Know Better.
Me: Come on fam, I'm only 47 years old!!

Police Inspector: Why didn't you report your card that was stolen previously?
Husband: The thief was spending less than my wife.
Inspector: Then why are you reporting it now?
Husband: I now think that the thief's wife has started using it.

A woman visits her husband in prison. Before leaving, she tells a correction officer; "You shouldn't make my husband work like that. He's exhausted!". The officer laughs and says, "Are you kidding? All any of them do is eat, sleep and stay in their cell. Very few do work detail for extra credit on time served or even fewer go out in the yard to exercise. Many sit in the T.V. room all day. The wife replies, "Well, I beg to differ with your take on these poor inmates, but my husband just told me that he's been digging a tunnel for months, so there!"

Finn and Liam are at the Pub and Finn says, "I farted on the bus this morning and 4 old buggers turned around and glared at me, sakes alive, I felt like I was on The Voice.

Dammit I'm Mad is exact same spelled backwards

My new car has a button for pretty much everything. There's even one that reads: 'rear wiper', still a tad too nervous to try that one yet.

HAPPY NEW YEAR 2026 TO ALL YOU FUNNY & FUN-LOVING BIKERS! (((BIG LONG HUGS)))

Joker's Wild composed by: Toni McCoy Shearon | thunderroadsfounder@gmail.com

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Keep reading, keep riding, and remember...WHERE THERE'S BIKES THERE'S GOING TO BE THUNDER!

EVENTS

JANUARY 2026

January 11
 - 30th Annual Motorcycle Swap Meet
 Marion County Fairgrounds
 220 E. Fairground St.
 Marion, OH
 More info www.hugeswapmeets.com

- D14 State Championship Series Round 1
 Valley Trail Riders M/C
 4957 Brown Rd.
 Bently, MI
 More info www.d14ice.com

January 17
 - Ice Racing on Crystal Lake
 Crystal Lake
 202 N. Shore Dr.
 Crystal, MI
 More info www.d14ice.com

January 18
 - D14 State Championship Series Round 2
 Leisure Lake Family Campground
 505 S. Warner Rd.
 Sumner, MI
 More info www.d14ice.com

February 14
 - Ice Racing on Crystal Lake
 Crystal Lake
 202 N. Shore Dr.
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January 23
 - ABATE Seminar
 Four Points by Sheraton- Saginaw
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January 25
 - D14 State Championship Series Round 3
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- D14 State Championship Series Round 6
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FEBRUARY 2026

February 1
 - D14 State Championship Series Round 4
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 4957 Brown Rd.
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 More info www.d14ice.com

February 7
 - 2026 AMA Ice Race
 Grand National Championship
 Leisure Lake Family Campground
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 More info www.d14ice.com

February 8
 - 2026 AMA Ice Race
 Grand National Championship
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February 22
 - Annual Flint Motorcycle Swap Meet
 Dort Financial Center
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 More info www.hugeswapmeets.com

- D14 State Championship Series Round 7
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February 28
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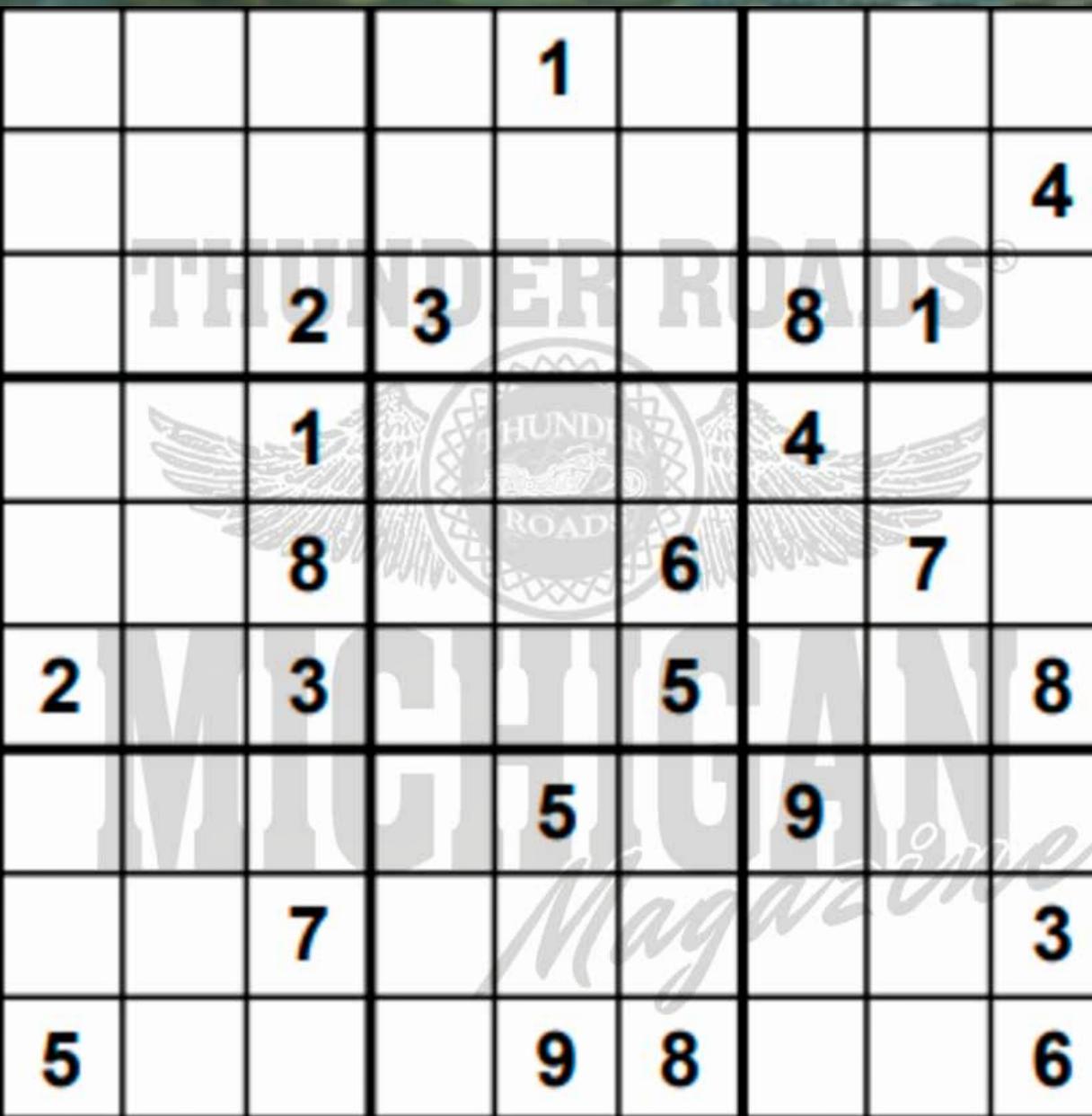
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To get your event listed in Thunder Roads Magazine and on our website, send the information to: Editor@ThunderRoadsMichigan.com. Event information must be received prior to the 10th of the month preceding the event month to be posted in the magazine.

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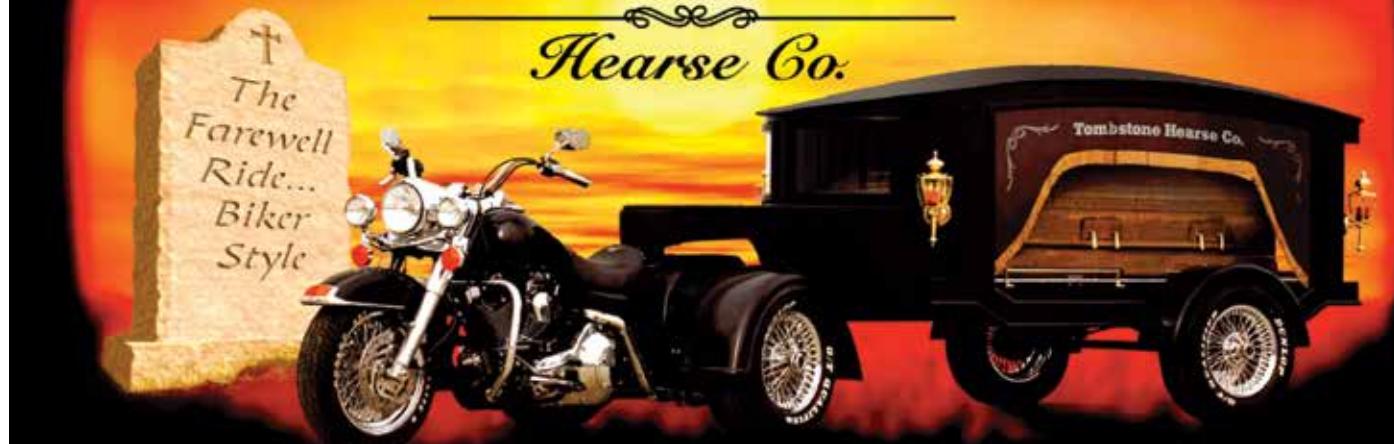
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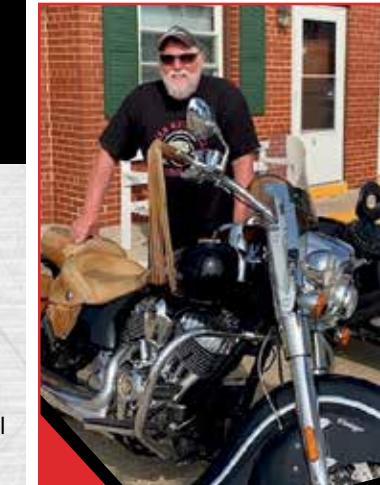
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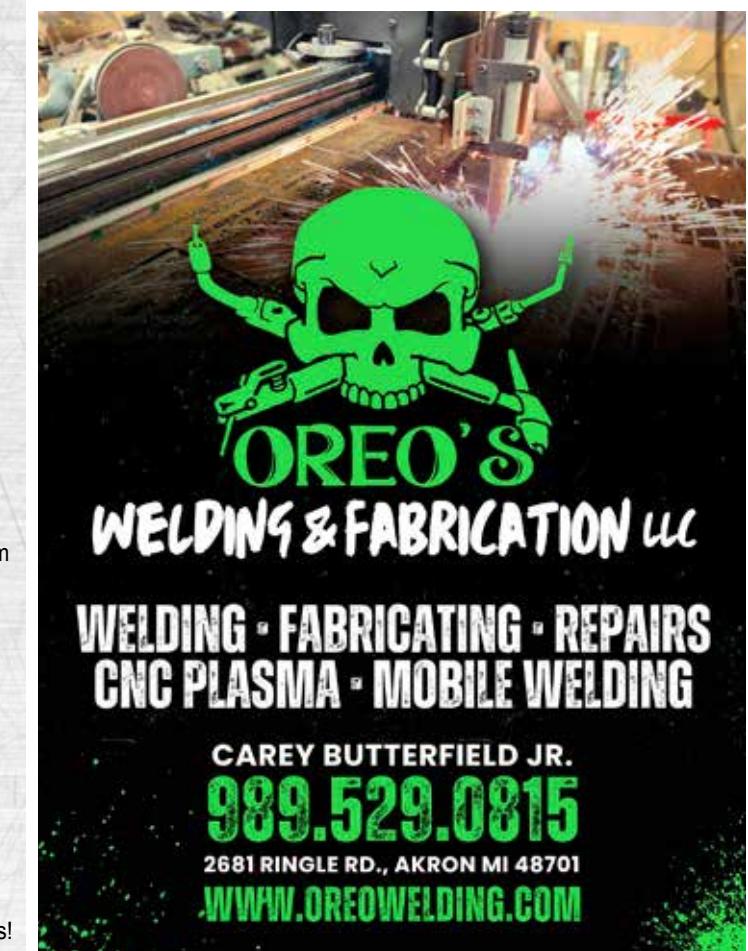


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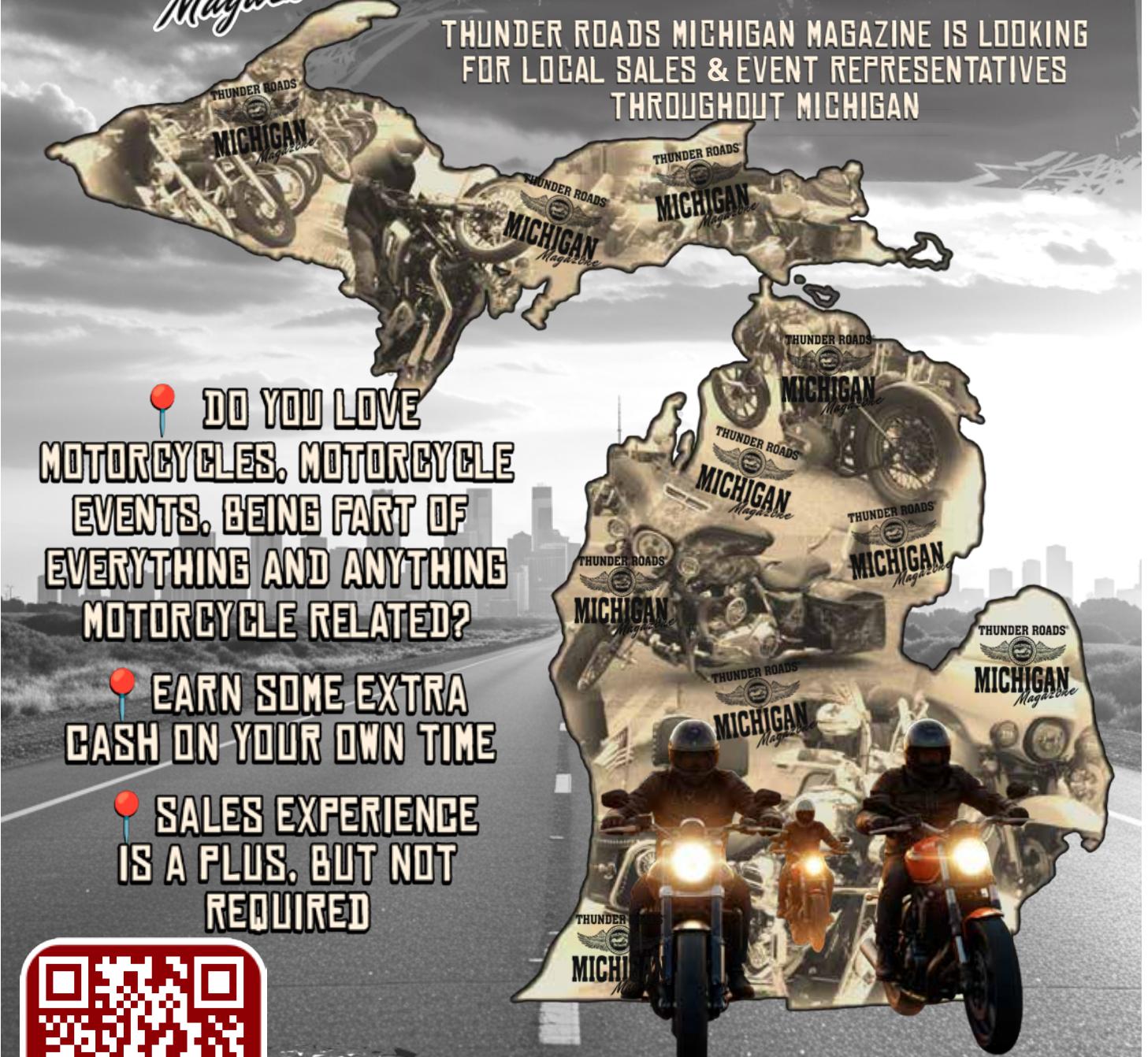
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