

LifeScape Children's Services

Rapid City, SD



Children in the Black Hills learn to walk, play, talk, feed and dress themselves because of you. Our sincere thanks go to the Hamsters USA organization for everything you've done for LifeScape Children's Care over the years.

Over \$5.4 million has been raised by the Hamsters USA through the auction, donations and other activities throughout the past twenty years! You keep therapy, education and health services closer to home for children with special needs in western South Dakota.



LifeScape
Children's Care Services

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www.LifeScapeSD.org

Request for Donation Fact Sheet

Hamster USA Silent Auction – August 10, 2026 in Spearfish, SD

The following represents several excerpts from articles published in the official Sturgis publications, LifeScape newsletters, industry magazines, newspapers, and other media outlets documenting the incredible generosity of the Hamsters USA group.

The Group

The Hamsters USA organization has one very clearly stated objective – fun! The common bonds within this group for the last 47 years are clearly the love of custom bikes and friendship. From coast-to-coast in this nation and around the world, the focus of the Hamsters USA group is to simply enjoy the company of old and new friends alike. With the Hamsters, it seems there is never a reason needed for a few of the guys to get together simply in the name of fun.

This group truly shares a personal interest in the lives and well-being of its members.

Each year during the Sturgis Motorcycle Rally, there are many organized events and informal gatherings of the Hamsters, and they are all based solely on friendship and fun. One of the organized Hamsters USA gatherings is the annual “Monday Icebreaker and Cocktail Party,” and it is truly a highlight! The room is full of those classic Hamsters USA yellow t-shirts, and it is literally abuzz with excitement.

The Auction

This Monday event is the single largest get-together of Hamsters during the year. The silent auction held that night to benefit LifeScape Children’s Care Services in Rapid City is a focal point for many. Hamsters USA “captains and friends” from around the world work as a team to have the most amazing auction items donated. As you can imagine, when the most distinguished custom motorcycle builders in the world are involved, some pretty incredible items are donated! The industry truly stands behind this Hamsters USA fund-raising effort. The prominent companies in the world recognize the value of this great cause and donate some of the finest motorcycle parts.

Hamsters USA members and supporters donate nearly everything imaginable, including art, fine wine, wonderful cigars, great clothing and apparel, unique musical instruments, jewelry, and even furniture!

In 2025, the Hamsters USA organization helped over 2,124 children supported by LifeScape Children’s Care. Supporting this wonderful charity in such a big way does not define this amazing group – it is just one of the remarkable things they do. This fundraising effort has always been and always will be about the kids.

LifeScape, formerly Children’s Care – Rapid City, SD

LifeScape–Children’s Care Services in Rapid City is focused on helping children with special needs and fundamentally believe that all kids deserve to reach their greatest potential. They provide a comprehensive set of services that bridge the medical, behavioral, educational demands, and rehabilitation of children with a wide variety of special needs.



Hamsters USA raises \$332,700 for special kids at LifeScape in Rapid City

Pioneer staff reports Aug 6, 2025 0



Members of Hamsters USA visit with LifeScape service recipient Lyla Monday evening. Hamsters USA raised nearly \$333,000 for the LifeScape which provides therapies to youth. Courtesy photo

SPEARFISH — For the past 20 years during Rally Week, the international motorcycle group Hamsters USA has gone out of their way to help Black Hills area kids grow up strong.

Their annual fundraiser for LifeScape Rapid City was held Monday night in Spearfish, raising \$332,700.

These funds help West River children get the physical, occupational, speech, and behavior therapies they need to empower them for greater independence.

"Hamsters USA through their generosity help ensure children with disabilities in rural, underserved areas of western South Dakota have access to care they need to thrive," said LifeScape Foundation President Jessica Wells. "Without their support 1,600 children would not have access to consistent physical, occupational, speech and behavior care services."

The fundraiser was part of their annual meeting during Rally Week. For the fourth year, Gov. Larry Rhoden was a special guest at the event. Seven-year-old Lyla, who receives physical and occupational therapy at LifeScape, was there to greet as many Hamsters USA members as she could. Lyla was diagnosed with cancer at 16 months old. Chemotherapy and other treatments left her with chronic kidney disease, seizures, neuropathy in her hands and feet, cyclic vomiting syndrome, food sensitivities, bowel and bladder damage, and high blood pressure. LifeScape began treating Lyla two months into her chemo treatments. She comes for physical and occupational therapy every week working on her strength, stamina, balance, and fine motor skills to help her be more successful in school. Her newest goal is to learn to ride a bike – because Lyla is determined to be like other kids. Hamsters USA are helping her and hundreds of other kids do just that.

"We are really grateful for everything the Hamsters' support has done to help us," said Mikoyla, Lyla's mom.

LifeScape Rapid City served 1,600 children in 2024. Besides the clinic site in Rapid City, clinicians from LifeScape drive over 10,000 miles each month to deliver outreach therapies to kids in their own communities – in their homes, schools, and daycare centers. This allows children living long distances from Rapid City to receive developmental help without their parents having to take time off work to drive them to Rapid City for therapies.

LifeScape's mission is to empower children with disabilities to live their best lives. With the help of Hamsters USA, West River kids are doing just that.

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20 years of giving

Hamsters give total of \$5.2M to support local kids in need



Hamsters member Nick Anastasakos poses with Lifescope Foundation client, Olivia Bybee. *Courtesy photo*

By WENDY PITLICK
Black Hills Pioneer

SPEARFISH — Hamsters support kids, and they have for 20 years.

For the last two decades, the international organization of philanthropic motorcycle riders has contributed a total of \$5.2 million to Lifescope Foundation, an organization committed to providing behavioral, physical and occupational therapy services and equipment for kids in need in Western South Dakota. The money comes from an auction the Hamsters have at their annual banquet in Spearfish during the Sturgis Motorcycle Rally. In 2024, Hamsters member Greg Wick said the organization helped support 900 kids in Pennington, Meade, and Lawrence counties.

“Honestly, supporting it this long, if you lose a bit of enthusiasm all you have to do is walk through the facility in Rapid City,” Wick said. “It’s not just that particular child that needs

the help, but it impacts their brothers, sisters, their moms and dads. It’s just amazing. It’s funny, for a group of bikers. We’re custom motorcycle enthusiasts. That’s what we’re about. It’s so cool to be able to give back to the Black Hills.”

The impact the Hamsters make with their giving is widespread, said Jessica Wells, president of the Lifescope Foundation. The children Lifescope serves have a variety of different treatment needs, including autism, behavioral, speech and physical therapy, and more.

“We’ve got kids that are recovering from accidents and surgeries, that have to re-learn how to walk, or those that need to learn how to safely drive a power wheelchair,” Wells said. “So the actual nuts and bolts of what the Hamsters help provide is access to additional therapy sessions and different scholarship programs. (There are) different charity care type of situations where kids need that extra bit

of therapy to help meet their goals. It helps buy equipment and supplies, so it might be autism testing supplies or toys for the therapy gym. Insurance companies don’t cover equipment until a child has tried them out. It’s very hard because these pieces of equipment are several thousands of dollars, so the families really don’t have the means to necessarily try out lots of different kinds. So, we’ve got different libraries of equipment that kids can check out and try to see if that’s the best fit for them. We need to have those pieces on hand for these kids to be able to try lots of different options, to find the best possible one.”

Lifescope therapists also travel to patients to provide services, and Hamsters help pay for that, too. Last year, Wells said her therapists logged more than 10,000 miles per month, traveling to provide services for more than 1,600 children in western South

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20 YEARS OF GIVING

Dakota. Wells said in many instances, therapy would not be available for kids if therapists weren't able to travel to their daycare, preschool, or school for services. Some therapies, she said, can be several hours long, several days a week.

"Our therapists help with getting those kids to be more independent in providing those services," Wells said. "It's a big area and our reimbursement doesn't quite cover the cost to provide services for kids. The Hamsters really help fill that gap, so that those services are always there when the kids need them."

"So our outreach program helps families keep both parents working, but yet the child's needs continue to be met," Wells continued. "It's a lot of windshield time for our therapists. But when those kids make that progress that they otherwise wouldn't, that means a lot and makes it worth it."

Wells said the mission of Lifescope is to empower children to live their best lives, by helping them to gain independent mobility, speech, and other skills. In addition to therapy, Lifescope also provides orthotics, prosthetics, fitting for wheelchairs and braces, and other equipment services.

Wells said the Hamsters help make all of that possible.

"I'm in awe of them," she said. "From what I've observed, this is a group of guys who really want to have fun together. They're not all wealthy. I mean, a lot of people think the Hamsters are very wealthy. Some of them are. But like in any group, you've got a whole



"Big Rick," a member of Hamsters USA, holds one of the children who receives services from Lifescope Foundation. Courtesy photo

mix of people. One thing that is truly a common factor for all of them is their generosity and wanting to make a difference and impact on kids' lives. We usually have family that comes and is part of a greeting time before the event starts. To see these big motorcycle guys just melt when a little girl wants to put

a sticker on their shirt, or wants to know their name, that's humanity at its best. They're an amazing group."

While Lifescope provides services across South Dakota, the Hamsters donations are restricted to be used in the Black Hills. Wick said that's because many of the Hamsters consider the Black Hills their second

home, and in some cases, many of them have moved here. The Hamsters want to make sure their contributions stay in the area they like to call home.

In addition to Lifescope, Hamsters USA also support Meals on Wheels in Spearfish, and the Sturgis Motorcycle Museum.



Members of Hamsters USA pose for a group photo at their 2024 annual banquet in Spearfish. For 20 years members of Hamsters USA have been giving to the Lifescope Foundation, to support various therapies for children in the Black Hills. Pioneer file photo



by: [Cindy Babe](#)
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RAPID CITY, S.D. (KELO) — The international motorcycle group, Hamsters USA, raised \$371,700 for [LifeScape](#) kids in West River South Dakota. The funds were raised Monday night at Hamsters USA's annual fundraiser held in Spearfish, during the Sturgis Motorcycle Rally, according to a LifeScape Foundation news release.

The funding will assist West River children in gaining greater independence through physical, occupational, speech, and behavior therapies. "This year's total puts the accumulated contributions over the \$5 million mark," LifeScape Foundation President Jessica Wells said in the news release. "For 19 years, Hamsters USA has been our strong partner, ensuring children with disabilities get the help they need."

Five-year-old Olivia Bybee of rural Custer, who gets physical therapy at LifeScape, attended with her family. Olivia learned to walk with LifeScape's help and continues to improve her balance and coordination.



Olivia Bybee with Lt. Gov. Larry Rhoden

For the third year, Lt. Gov. Larry Rhoden was a special guest at the event.

"I've seen a little girl who couldn't walk," Olivia's mom, Sara, said in the news release. "That little girl can walk now and doesn't want to hold my hand anymore. And that's worth more than anything."

In 2023, LifeScape Rapid City served 1,200 children. LifeScape clinicians drive over 10,000 miles each month to deliver outreach therapies to kids in their homes, schools and daycare centers. This outreach service brings developmental help to the children rather than parents taking time off work to drive their kids to therapy in Rapid City.



Hamsters USA raises \$291,472 at Sturgis Rally gathering for Black Hills kids with disabilities



Hamsters USA members Brian Klock, Nick Trask, and Harlan Schillinger with Javin Smith-Williamson, a LifeScape outpatient. Also shown are Javin's mom, Amanda Smith, and his grandfather, Marv Smith.



Hamsters USA member Greg Wick, with (L-R) LifeScape Foundation President Jessica Wells; LifeScape outpatient Jobie Berger with her parents, Kate and Tyler; South Dakota Lt. Gov. Larry Rhoden; and LifeScape CEO Steve Watkins.

For the past 18 years, the international motorcycle group Hamsters USA has mixed good deeds with the fun and great riding that's part of their annual Sturgis Rally gathering.

It all happens at the annual dinner held in Rally Week, with a silent auction to benefit LifeScape in Rapid City. Hamsters USA members and their friends generously donate silent auction items, and then generously buy them back! Many are motorcycle-related items with the Hamsters USA signature gold color and logo.

The event is a highlight for Hamsters for the reunion and comradery, plus it's when new members are inducted.

To hundreds of children in Western South Dakota, though, the success of the auction means that physical, occupational, speech, and behavioral therapy will remain available at LifeScape to help empower them for better lives.

At their August 7th, 2023 gathering—the group's 45th anniversary—Hamsters USA raised \$291,472.00 for kids with disabilities served by

LifeScape-Rapid City. South Dakota Lieutenant Governor Larry Rhoden attended the event for the second year in a row, and auctioned a branding iron for \$3500 that went toward the proceeds.

Since they began taking the kids of LifeScape under their wings, Hamsters USA has raised and contributed over \$4 million. The medical therapy services they support help kids learn to walk, speak, and live more independently.

Besides the clinic site in Rapid City, clinicians from LifeScape drive over 10,000 miles each month to provide therapies to kids in their homes, schools, and daycare centers. This allows children living in rural South Dakota to get developmental help without their parents having to take time off work to drive them to appointments in Rapid City.

“Our gratitude to Hamsters USA is deep,” says Jessica Wells, President of the LifeScape Foundation. “Their contributions truly help keep services viable in Western South Dakota. As parents tell us often, there is no place else with this kind of pediatric care on this side of the state.”





Hamsters USA continue legacy for Black Hills kids with disabilities

SPEARFISH — Hamsters USA, the international motorcycle group who've adopted the Black Hills as their second home, gathered this in Spearfish Monday and raised \$467,050 for kids with disabilities served by LifeScape in Rapid City.

Funds were raised through a silent auction, a separate event — Arizona Bike Week — and a "cash call" made by two veteran Hamster members. In addition, special guest Lt. Gov. Larry Rhoden raised \$3500 through a live auction of a branding iron he had forged and donated.

Hamsters USA has raised and donated funds at their annual meeting and banquet for the last 17 years, now totaling over \$4 million. The funds help provide physical, occupational, speech, and behavioral therapies for kids in the Black Hills and beyond. Clinicians from LifeScape drive over 10,000 miles each month to deliver services to kids in their own communities — in their homes, schools, and daycare centers.

One of the children served at LifeScape is 5-year-old Kendyl of Sturgis, who was born with spina bifida. Kendyl, her two siblings, and her parents, Kelle and Jeff, made a stage appearance at the Hamsters USA annual banquet. They shared their daughter's story and how LifeScape is helping her learn to walk. Kendyl charmed the bikers with her outgoing personality and handed out Disney princess, Paw Patrol, and Star Wars stickers for them to wear on their signature goldenrod-colored t-shirts.

Kendyl's family moved to Sturgis last year from Oregon. She receives physical therapy at LifeScape, and has ankle/foot orthotics (AFOs) from LifeScape affiliate RISE Custom Solutions, which stabilize her for standing. "It's a great environment — just the best," said Kelle. Jeff thanked the Hamsters for helping their daughter meet her full potential.

"We are so, so grateful to Hamsters USA," said Jessica Wells, president of the LifeScape Foundation. "For 17 years, they have helped keep services available for hundreds of kids at LifeScape Rapid City. The difference they've made in children's lives in Western South Dakota is impossible to measure. The funds they raise and their genuine concern for children with disabilities is heartwarming and inspiring. This is our favorite day of the year!"



Hamsters USA: Champions of West River Children with Disabilities

Hamsters USA, the longtime friends of children's services at LifeScape Rapid City, blew their already amazing philanthropic giving out of the water at their annual meeting in August 2021.

The group meets during the Sturgis Rally, and for the last 17 years, has hosted a silent and live auction for LifeScape at their banquet. These events have typically raised an amazing amount of money at the one-night event – usually around \$250,000. This past year, though, they came together to raise an unprecedented \$550,957, which all stays local to support children with disabilities in western South Dakota!

Inspired this past year by seven-year-old Ruby Lehmann, who spoke on stage with her mom, Shannon, and her brother, David, Hamsters USA stepped up to do more than ever before! Hamsters USA stormed the stage to give cash and credit card pledges, which were matched by members John McCarthy and Bobby Garone. That segment of the evening raised approximately \$204,000 alone!



Over the past 17 years, Hamsters USA has raised \$4 million to support LifeScape's services to children in western South Dakota. Their gifts help provide services to children at our clinic in Rapid City, as well as directly to kids in their Black Hills area homes and schools. Outreach therapies are delivered by LifeScape personnel who drive over 10,000 miles a month to provide services in the children's own communities.

Ruby was diagnosed at nine months old with spastic diplegic cerebral palsy after her parents noticed she wasn't meeting typical milestones. Doctors believe Ruby had a stroke in utero early in her development, which prevented part of her brain from fully forming. It affected three-fourths of her body – her entire left side and her right leg. She began physical and occupational therapy at 10 months, and at the age of three, began speech therapy, primarily for a gag reflex. RISE Custom Solutions, a subsidiary of LifeScape, has fitted her for foot orthotics, a reverse walker, and wheelchair.

She now receives physical and occupational therapies at school and through LifeScape. She is very determined, often proving doctors wrong and surpassing all expectations. Ruby's mom is so grateful for LifeScape, and for donors like Hamsters USA that make sure the high-quality services are available to families like theirs. "I will do anything and everything possible to make sure she is the best she can be," says Shannon.

Jessica Wells, President of the LifeScape Foundation, added, "We are just completely blown away by these incredible men. Our services would look very different were it not for them."





Black Hills Pioneer

Hamsters USA raise \$538,252 at Annual Banquet

SPEARFISH, SD — Hamsters USA, the international motorcycle group with big hearts, roared into western South Dakota to make an unparalleled impact for local kids with disabilities.

At the group's annual banquet Monday, the members raised an unprecedented \$538,252 for LifeScape of Rapid City, and all those funds stay in western South Dakota to support children with disabilities.

Hamsters USA has raised and donated funds for the last 16 years, with a deep desire to give back to the greater Black Hills community, which many Hamsters consider their second home. Their gifts help provide services to children in their Black Hills area homes and communities, delivered by LifeScape personnel who drive more than 10,000 miles a month to provide services.

Inspired by little Ruby Lehmann, who spoke on stage with her mom, Shannon and her brother, David, the Hamsters stepped up to do more than ever before. Hamsters stormed the stage to give cash and credit card pledges, which were matched by John McCarthy and Bobby Garone. That piece of the presentation raised approximately \$204,000 alone!

At only 9 months of age, Ruby was diagnosed with spastic diplegic cerebral palsy, after her parents noticed she wasn't meeting typical milestones, such as rolling over and sitting up on her own. Doctors believe Ruby had a stroke in utero early in her development, which prevented part of her brain from fully forming. It affected three-quarters of her body – her entire left side and her right leg. Ruby started physical and occupational therapy at 10 months, and at the age of 3, began speech therapy, primarily for a "funky gag reflex." She had braces on her feet and began receiving additional therapies through LifeScape. RISE Custom Solutions, a subsidiary of LifeScape, fitted her for a reverse walker and wheelchair when she outgrew the hospital walker.

Ruby now receives physical and occupational therapies at school, as well as through LifeScape. She has surpassed all doctors' expectations. Smart and artistic, she also thinks very literally, so a vivid imagination is not as evident, but she is very vocal and opinionated. Ruby plans to start dance in just a few weeks and enjoys horse-riding therapy and water therapy. She has received Botox injections into her tight muscles to help with her gait, and it has made a difference.

LifeScape's mission is to empower children with disabilities to lead fulfilling lives. Ruby's mom is so grateful that LifeScape is here for Ruby, and she is also so grateful for donors, like the Hamsters, that come together to make sure the high-quality services provided by LifeScape are available to families like theirs.

Strong-willed and extremely determined, Ruby wants to be a doctor when she grows up. "I will do anything and everything possible to make sure she is the best she can be," Shannon said.

"We are just completely blown away by these incredible men. They amaze us year after year, and this year is even more exceptional," said Jessica Wells, president of the LifeScape Foundation. "We are so grateful for 16 years of commitment and caring from this very special group of gentlemen. Their love of the Black Hills of South Dakota and the local children they support shows through in the incredible dollars they raise and the heartfelt sentiments they share. These guys warm our hearts every year – our services would look very different were it not for them."

LifeScape has more than 40 locations in Sioux Falls, as well as locations in Rapid City and Sioux City, through which they support people in 63 counties in South Dakota and northwest Iowa. LifeScape supports more than 4,000 children and adults annually, 900 of which are supported by the Rapid City LifeScape location



Hamsters USA raise \$161,833 for Special Kids at LifeScape in Rapid City, SD!

Hamsters USA, the international motorcycle group with big hearts, rolled into western South Dakota to make an impact for kids with disabilities... AGAIN! These great guys came together throughout the year to raise funds for LifeScape of Rapid City culminating near \$161,833, all staying local to support children with disabilities in Western SD!

Hamsters USA has raised and donated funds at their annual meeting for the last 15 years, with a deep desire to give back to the greater Black Hills community, which many Hamsters consider their second home. This year's event brings their cumulative total for 15 years to almost \$3.5 million in total dollars raised for LifeScape in Rapid City. Their gifts help provide services to children in their Black Hills area homes and communities, delivered by LifeScape personnel who drive over 10,000 miles a month to provide services.

During a normal year, one of the children impacted by the dollars raised by the Hamsters would be in attendance at the event. Due to COVID-19, there was not a family there this year. However, T.J. Lindsay of Rapid City was highlighted in the annual program. T.J. was diagnosed with autism when he was a

year old. Autism means different things for each person diagnosed. For T.J., in addition to hyper-motion in his body movements and being non-verbal, it means he is very specific about how he likes things to be. T.J. primarily receives occupational and speech therapy. After working with LifeScape over the span of just one year, T.J.'s word count has expanded significantly, and he now uses up to 20 words! The most special word was more recent when he said "Mom" for the first time. Holly shared, "Having him say 'Mom' to me in context was everything to me. It was a big moment—it was really huge! LifeScape has definitely given him the support to find his voice."

LifeScape's mission is to empower children with disabilities to lead fulfilling lives. Holly is so grateful that LifeScape is here for T.J., and she is also so grateful for donors, like the Hamsters, that come together to make sure the high-quality services provided by LifeScape are available to families like theirs. She added, "Your donations matter. Thank you!"

Jessica Wells, President of the LifeScape Foundation, added, "We are so grateful for 15 years of commitment and caring from this very special group of gentlemen. Their love of this region and the children they support shows through in the dollars they raise and the sentiments they share. These guys warm our hearts every year – our services would look very different were it not for them."



Hamsters USA raise \$328,344 for Kids at LifeScape in Rapid City!

Hamsters USA, the international motorcycle group with big hearts, rolled into western South Dakota to make an impact for kids with disabilities... AGAIN! These great guys came together throughout the year to raise funds for LifeScape of Rapid City culminating near \$328,344 – all staying local to support children with disabilities in Western SD!

Hamsters USA has raised and donated funds at their annual meeting for the last 14 years, with a deep desire to give back to the greater Black Hills community, which many Hamsters consider their second home. This year's event brings their cumulative total for 14 years to over \$3.3 million in total dollars raised for LifeScape in Rapid City. Their gifts help to provide services to children in their Black Hills area homes and communities, delivered by LifeScape personnel who drive over 10,000 miles a month to provide services.

Additionally, in recognition of his incredible spirit, longstanding commitment to the motorcycle community, and especially for his dedication to the care of children in need, John McCarthy was presented with the 2019 Chrome Heart Award. (See photo to right of John McCarthy being presented the Chrome Heart Award by LifeScape Foundation President, Jessica Wells, and the Miller family – Arianna Blakemore holding the award, surrounded by mom, Jamie Miller, and sister, Jasmine.)



Arianna Blakemore, a four-year-old from Sturgis, SD, and her family, spoke at this year's event. Jamie Miller delivered her beautiful daughter Arianna at just 31 weeks. After spending two-and-a-half months in the NICU, she went home on continuous oxygen. While still in utero, she had been diagnosed with clubfoot. At the time of her release from the hospital, Arianna was diagnosed with Arthrogryposis, a rare condition which contracts the joints, fixing them in one position. This can affect many joints, but for her, it affects her ankles, elbows, wrists and fingers. Additionally, Arianna has been diagnosed with spastic cerebral palsy and chronic lung disease. Arianna has had her legs casted 18 times and has had two different surgeries on each of her legs. It was through the castings that the family was first introduced to LifeScape. Since that time, she has started physical, occupational and speech therapy. While primarily using a wheelchair for transportation, she has started to walk short distances on her own. She is also starting to talk more, and while it's not always clear what she's saying, she's pretty vocal and makes her needs known. Her mom says, "Arianna is quite a handful when she wants to be, and all of the LifeScape team has always been amazing and calm with her. Arianna loves playing at therapy and is excited when she sees us drive up to the building."

Arianna and her family are proud to be ambassadors for LifeScape at the Hamsters' event this year, thanking them for their fundraising efforts that directly impact their family.

LifeScape's mission is to empower children with disabilities to lead fulfilling lives. Arianna and her family feel that LifeScape has truly done that for them, and they are so grateful to LifeScape and to the donors, like the Hamsters, who make the strides and miracles they've experienced possible.





Black Hills Pioneer

Hamsters USA raise \$328,344 for Kids at LifeScape in Rapid City!

SPEARFISH, SD — Hamsters USA, the international motorcycle group with big hearts, rolled into western South Dakota to make an impact for kids with disabilities — again.

For the past 14 years, Hamsters USA has raised and donated funds at their annual banquet giving back to the Black Hills, which many consider their second home. This year, the group raised \$318,344, all of which will stay local.

This year's event brings their cumulative total for 14 years to over \$3.3 million in total dollars raised for LifeScape in Rapid City.

Their gifts help provide services to children in their Black Hills area homes and communities, delivered by LifeScape personnel who drive over 10,000 miles a month to provide services.

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While primarily using a wheelchair for transportation, she has started to walk short distances on her own. She is also starting to talk more, and while it's not always clear what she's saying, she's pretty vocal and makes her needs known. Her mom says, "Arianna is quite a handful when she wants to be, and all of the LifeScape team has always been amazing and calm with her. Arianna loves playing at therapy and is excited when she sees us drive up to the building."



Custom Motorcycle Group Rolls into Mitchell

More than 100 members of the legendary motorcycle group Hamsters USA will be riding to town this week to kick off its 40th anniversary celebration before continuing west to attend the 78th Annual Sturgis Motorcycle Rally.

The founding members of the Hamsters include Arlen Ness, Dave Perewitz, Donnie Smith, Ed Kerr, Barry Cooney, Steve Allington and the late Jim "Jimmy" Leahy. The founding of the Hamsters began in 1978 during Daytona Bike Week. The story goes that Leahy, Perewitz, and his then-girlfriend were taking a nap and when they woke up nobody was around.



Left without transportation, money or food, Leahy started calling them "Hamsters" thinking it would aggravate the group but the name stuck and so did the rodent as a mascot on their bright yellow shirts. "We are more a group of friends and that's how we keep it. We don't even want to call it a club. We are more like a Harley owners group. We don't have patches, especially not on our back," said Smith.

Giving back to the community and children, in particular, is a big part of what the Hamsters do. It started with a silent auction raising about \$40,000 and donating the funds to the Kids in Chrome Foundation. Bob Illingworth, a late Hamster member, suggested soon after this first philanthropic endeavor that the Hamsters start their own fundraiser and made the introduction between the LifeScape Foundation and the Hamsters.

Now 14 years into their relationship with South Dakota's LifeScape, the Hamsters have donated close to \$3 million for children in South Dakota to receive speech therapy, occupational and physical therapy in Rapid City and in the western part of the state. The Hamsters have more than 300 members around the world. "The generosity of the Hamsters helps in a very specialized way. Insurance doesn't always cover this. So these donations open doors for children who cannot afford therapy sessions," said Jessica Wells, LifeScape Foundation President.

This year some of the funds raised will go towards children with autism, mainly in the western part of the state. Currently, there is a three-to-four-months-long waiting list for autism evaluations in that region. "Thanks to the big hearts of the Hamsters this can be shortened soon," said Wells. Besides riding their motorcycles, the riders await another honor this year. The group is being inducted into the Sturgis Motorcycle Museum's Hall of Fame.





Hamsters USA Arizona Bike Week raises \$65,156 for special kids at LifeScape in Rapid City

Hamsters USA, the international motorcycle group with big hearts, kickstarted their 2018 fundraising efforts with a HUGE ROAR heard in the desert thanks to the Arizona Hamsters! Talk about a burnout – they are RUNNING FULL THROTTLE! The 2018 Arizona Bike Week Dry Heat Charity Run raised \$65,156 for children with disabilities supported at LifeScape in western South Dakota!

Hamsters USA has raised and donated funds annually for the last twelve years, wanting to give back to the greater Black Hills community, which many Hamsters consider their second home. Last August's event brought their cumulative total for 12 years to over \$2.7 million in total dollars raised for LifeScape Children's Care in Rapid City. 100% of funds raised by the Hamsters USA stay in the Black Hills of South Dakota to benefit children with disabilities. They are superheroes! Their gifts help provide services to children in their Black Hills area homes and communities, delivered by LifeScape Children's Care personnel who drive over 10,000 miles a month to provide physical, occupational and speech therapy, special education and behavioral services. This latest gift will make an immediate and significant impact for these children with disabilities.



A Tribute to a True Legend: Arlen Ness (1939-2019)



Custom motorcycle legend, and entrepreneur Arlen Ness passed away Friday, March 22, 2019, comfortably in his home surrounded by his loved ones. Ness is survived by his wife of 59 years, Beverly, his children, and grandchildren.

Ness is described as a visionary in the motorcycle industry. "Motorcycling has been a great ride ... my whole life since I've been motorcycling has been wonderful. I've met so many nice people. Friends all over the world. ... We can go almost anywhere and stay with friends. It's been great," Ness once said.

Everyone who knew Ness respects him for his achievements and for who he was as a person, both of which are superlatives. That respect is how Ness came to deserve the commonly spoken nickname "The King of Custom Motorcycles."

Ness was inducted into the Sturgis Motorcycle Museum's Hall of Fame in 1992.

He rarely reflected on his own success. This was apparent at the 2016 Sturgis Motorcycle Museum's Hall of Fame ceremony when he received the first ever Lifetime Achievement Award.

He simply said, "Thank you very much." Born July 12, 1939, Ness has touched the lives of many people throughout the country.

He was instrumental in founding Hamsters USA, a group of philanthropic motorcyclists who have made LifeScape of Rapid City a major source of their charity. Over the past 13 years, Hamsters USA has donated more than \$3 million to help children with disabilities in western South Dakota.

"I've known Arlen since he had his little shop in Oakland. His story is the American story," said Scott Peterson, of Belle Fourche, a family friend and fellow Hamsters USA member. "He started with nothing, married his wife Bev, raised his family, made a living doing what he loved by building custom bikes, and he was highly successful in all of the above. He lived his dream."

"Everyone liked Arlen Ness. Whether they were a Hells Angel or a Hamster. Everyone liked him and he was known all over the world," Peterson continued. "He always had time for every fan, and he was so approachable. One of the treasures I will have for the rest of my life is the bike that Arlen built just for me in 2016. He personally built three custom Victory Vision motorcycles over one winter. One for himself, one for Jeff Erb, and one for me. I am honored to have been part of his true inner friendship circle."



Greg Wick, of Rapid City, is also a longtime member of the Hamsters USA, reflected on knowing Ness for over 20 years. "What a kind gentleman. He was so generous with his time," Wick said. Wick went on to say, "Arlen never really planned it, but these guys, he and Donnie (Smith) and David (Perewitz) in particular, took riding custom bikes in the 70s to a point, so that it isn't seen that same way today, as it was then. He made rolling art. Without trying, he bridged the gap between the bad-boy chopper image and the mainstream for bikers. The average person all of a sudden wanted to be into custom motorcycles."

In loving memory of a true legend, Arlen Ness.

Grateful for Hamsters USA & LifeScape, Rapid City

Guest Columnist: *Ana Hlucny, Whitewood, SD*



During the 2017 Sturgis Rally, five-year-old Mary Helen Hlucny and her parents, Ana and Cris, attended the annual gathering of the international motorcycle group Hamsters USA. The support the Hamsters have provided to LifeScape Rapid City for the past 12 years has directly impacted their family, and they wanted to thank the members. With this year's fundraising total of nearly \$207,000, Hamsters USA has contributed a total of \$2.7 million to help kids like Mary Helen live their best possible lives.

Mary Helen loves dogs, the color pink, and going fast. She directs intricate games of make-believe, and has a memorable answer to nearly every question. When she was born, however, no one could have predicted she'd be the bright, happy child she is today. Her mom, Ana, tells her story:

"We planned to surprise our family and friends with a pregnancy announcement for Mother's Day 2012. Instead, we shocked them all by introducing 2 lb. 5 oz. Mary Helen the week before, when she made her unexpected arrival 13 weeks early.

When she was a week old, an ultrasound revealed "holes" in her brain. We hadn't even been able to hold her except for a brief few minutes because she was too fragile. The doctor told us she might never talk or walk or be able to learn anything. Incredibly, after 78 days in the NICU, we brought her home on July 20th, without a feeding tube, oxygen, or even a monitor—and nearly 2 weeks before her due date. A nurse said to me, "What you're going to do is take her home and love her and take advantage of every opportunity you can find for her."

And that is what we have done. We didn't have an official diagnosis of spastic quadriplegic cerebral palsy until she was 18 months old. By then we were already used to weekly PT/OT sessions through the Birth to 3 program and looking for anything else we could take advantage of for her.

I cried when the doctor at the Shriner's Outreach Clinic told Mary Helen with a smile, "I think we can help you." In 2013, I contacted LifeScape for PT and OT screenings, and then, treatment.

Our time at LifeScape has been a real blessing. The Mustang gait trainer she got through them has truly been life changing. She shocked physical therapist Christine Stephenson by running down the hallway the first time we put her in it.

With every therapist we've had at LifeScape, the question always is, "How are things going at home?" Not, "What problem do I see today?" When it comes to trying or borrowing equipment, it's the same thing: What might be helpful to this child, to this family?

Last spring, we purchased a wheelchair for Mary Helen. Pink, of course—and we got to take home a donated power chair for her to use outside. They refurbished it so that her seating system transfers quickly from one chair to the other. There is simply no way she would have had that opportunity without a place like LifeScape.

Mary Helen currently sees Theresa Helfenstein once a week at LifeScape for an occupational therapy session that is really some incredible hybrid of OT, PT, make-believe, and some of the NeuroMovement principles we are learning in Denver. She loves it. There are tears when we can't make it, and she does something new every week! With a child with special needs, growth is continuous, even if sometimes it is nearly imperceptible. But, little things lead to big things.

While Mary Helen "plays," Theresa and I smile at each other as we point out the differences we notice each week. Better shoulder movement means her rolling and crawling are improving and she can move herself across the floor while she plays. Better wrist movement means she has better control of her fork, her markers, and the joystick on her power chair so she can drive herself to the garden, play tag in the yard, and help with feeding herself. Better arm strength and head control means she is sitting independently longer to play cards with us or play princess and drive her own chariot, pulled mostly by stuffed dogs.

Like any parents, we want Mary Helen to lead a life she finds fulfilling, to be someone who is respected and well thought of, to be independent, and to not feel trapped. Mary Helen's future is very bright, in part because of the help and support our family receives from LifeScape.



Ana Hlucny and her husband Cris, with daughters Mary Helen and Magdalen.



Mary Helen loves her OT sessions with Theresa Helfenstein. "The staff continually ask, 'What might be helpful to this child, to this family?'"



Community Partner:

Over \$2.5 million raised for LifeScape Children's Services in Rapid City

LifeScape in Rapid City has no better friend than Hamsters USA. Since 2014, the international motorcycle group has shown its love for the Black Hills of South Dakota by providing an equal and astounding level of support for its children.

Each year when they've come to the Sturgis Rally to ride their motorcycles through the beautiful hills and reconnect with old friends, they've also opened their hearts to kids with disabilities.

For the past 12 years, their support has helped provide physical, occupational, and speech therapies to over 800 children each year all over Western South Dakota—plus parts of Wyoming and Nebraska. Besides therapies provided at the outpatient center in Rapid City, staff members drive over 10,000 miles a month to provide therapies for kids in their homes, schools, and daycare centers.



AllState Sponsors with spokespeople Arlen, Corey and Zach Ness, Rick Fairless, Allstate representatives, Anne Rieck McFarland and Jessica Wells with the Habeck family (Melissa, Jim and James).



Event donor and Hamsters USA member Doug Robinson (left) and Hamsters USA member and LifeScape Foundation board member Harlan Schillinger (right) with the Habeck family.

The special guest at this year's event was four-year-old James Habeck of Belle Fourche, who was serenaded by the group of 650 bikers with his favorite song, "Itsy Bitsy Spider." There were smiles on the faces of every single person in the room.

The Hamsters USA event this year totaled a record \$343,000 for LifeScape Children's Services, raised through corporate and individual support, a silent auction, and special events before the rally. This makes their total contribution to LifeScape in the past 12 years over \$2.5 million!

Without this support, many of these children wouldn't receive the help they need to learn to walk, talk, and become as independent as possible.

Thank you, Hamsters USA, for the life-changing support you provide for children!

Hamsters USA donates \$241,000 to LifeScape of RC



Arlen Ness, third from right, and others gather around a custom motorcycle he created. The bike was auctioned off at Monday's Hamsters USA banquet at the Spearfish Holiday Inn. *Pioneer staff photo*

BY MARK WATSON

Black Hills Pioneer

SPEARFISH — A group of philanthropic motorcyclists raised nearly a quarter-million dollars Monday to donate to LifeScape of Rapid City.

LifeScape provides therapy and psychological services for children on an outpatient and outreach basis.

At the annual banquet of the Hamsters USA at the Spearfish Holiday Inn, approximately \$241,000 was raised.

"Nothing that we donate goes outside the Black Hills. None of the money goes to administration. It goes to the kids," said Keith Terry, of Hamsters USA.

Over the past nine years or so, the group has donated \$2.2 million to LifeScape, or the Children's Care Hospital and School before the two organizations combined. That is, of course, before this year's totals were added.

"We want to do what we can to make a difference," Terry said. "The kids are special to us."

One of the items auctioned at Monday's fundraiser was a custom motorcycle by famed bike builder Arlen Ness. That motorcycle fetched approximately \$35,000 during the silent auction.

Then, not being done raising funds for children this year, the Hamsters hosted a pancake feed Tuesday morning at a fundraiser in Spearfish for the local Kids Club, raising between \$500-\$600

"Hamsters are special," Terry said. "We're all very proud and honored to be able to do something for our community."

Hamsters USA raise funds in Belle Fourche boy's honor



One 4-year-old Belle Fourche boy stole the show and the hearts of many during the Hamsters annual banquet Monday, when \$36,950 was donated on his behalf to the physical and occupational therapy provider that regularly treats James Habeck, pictured in the arms of a Hamster. *Courtesy photo*

BY LACEY PETERSON

Black Hills Pioneer

SPEARFISH — Proving again that bikers have big hearts for kids, the international motorcycle group Hamsters USA raised a record \$285,395 for LifeScape Children's Care of Rapid City in fundraising events this year, culminating with their annual banquet in Spearfish Monday, where one Belle Fourche boy stole the show.

James Habeck and his family, of Belle Fourche, attended this year's Hamsters USA event.

James, 4, works with LifeScape therapists to overcome hurdles due to cerebral palsy (CP), the result of a severe brain injury caused by lack of oxygen during birth.

Because of the impact he made on several Hamster members, donations totaling \$36,950 were given to LifeScape in James' honor.

Funds raised for LifeScape of Rapid City provide physical, occupational, and speech therapies and psychological services to children in Western South Dakota and parts of Wyoming.

James' parents, Jim and Melissa, continue to hope that one day, with help from LifeScape, their youngest son will walk and talk.

Melissa shared the family's experience at the Hamsters event: "When we went, we were just supposed to tell James' story, and one big guy asked if he could hold James," she said. "It was kind of neat to see this huge man, and all he wanted to do was hold James."

She told the Pioneer how a room full of bikers turned soft in moments as they all sang the "Itsy Bitsy Spider" nursery rhyme with James.

"James had a great time," Melissa said.

The Habecks first visited LifeScape for therapy when James was 2-months-old. Now that he is in pre-school, Melissa brings him to Rapid City for three 30-minute sessions of physical, occupational, and speech therapy four days each week during the summer months. LifeScape also gives him access to the latest resources and state-of-the-art assistive equipment and the most recent therapies, designed specifically for children.

"No two kids with CP are the same, but James' situation is so specialized, and their level of expertise is just great," Melissa said. "I could go to other therapists closer to home, but they may not know how to work with kids like LifeScape does."

The family appreciated the opportunity to thank the Hamsters for their fundraising efforts that directly impact their family.

Melissa knows her hopes of seeing James walk and talk one day is still a distant dream.

"It's taken a lot to get him this far," she said. "But LifeScape is there with us, every step of the way."



Hamsters USA raises \$258,567 for Rapid City-based services to children!

Hamsters USA kicked off the biggest Sturgis Rally in history by breaking the \$2 million mark in total dollars raised for LifeScape Children's Services in Rapid City. Having raised and donated funds at their annual meeting for the last eleven years, the \$258,567 raised at this year's August gathering in Spearfish brought the total to nearly \$2.2 million.

Hamsters USA generously supports LifeScape Children's Services in Rapid City out of a desire to give back to the greater Black Hills community, which many Hamsters consider their second home. Their gifts help provide physical, occupational, and speech therapies, plus psychological services, to children in their West River homes and communities. LifeScape personnel drive over 10,000 miles a month to provide these services, helping children have the best life possible.

Hamsters USA member Keith Terry received the Chrome Heart Award, presented by LifeScape to honor those "whose philanthropic support and civic duty represents everything positive in the industry and sport of motorcycling."

Keith Terry, along with his wife, Fran, owns the largest supplier of motorcycle starter motors and battery cables in the industry. He has been involved in motorcycling since he was 15 years old. The former professional baseball player built his first custom motorcycle in 1994, and more than 20 years later continues to build, as well as mentor others through Buffalo Chip's Legends Ride Student Build Challenge. Terry was selected for the

2015 Chrome Heart Award for his commitment to the motorcycle community, his dedication to mentoring youth, and his contributions to making sure the children in the Black Hills area get the healthcare, therapies, and attention they need to be successful.

Keith Terry Honored with 11th Annual Chrome Heart Award



Keith Terry accepted the Chrome Heart Award from Jessica Wells, LifeScape Foundation President, left. Pictured at right is his wife and business partner, Fran Terry.



Thank you to Hamsters USA for their amazing support of children at LifeScape, Rapid City!



Hamsters USA continues to make a difference for children in the Black Hills. The international motorcycle group

raised \$253,330 for LifeScape of Rapid City in fundraising events this year, culminating in their annual gathering in Spearfish during the Sturgis Rally on Monday, August 4th.

Funds raised will provide physical, occupational, and speech therapies, plus psychological services, to children in Western South Dakota—and parts of Wyoming—through LifeScape's outpatient and outreach services for children from our center in Rapid City.

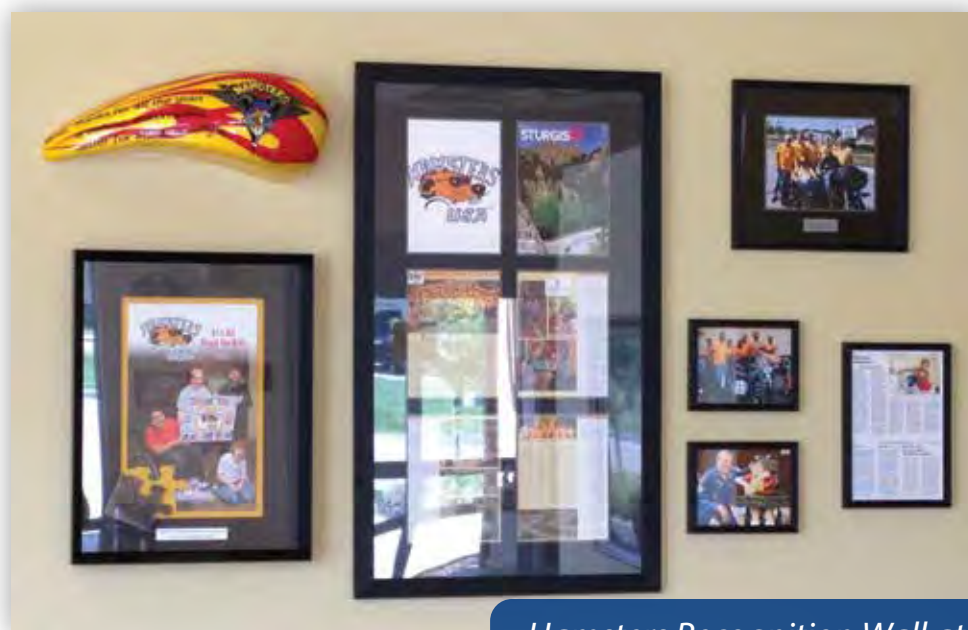
Hamster member Dan Roche received the Chrome Heart Award, presented by LifeScape to honor individuals in the motorcycle world "whose philanthropic support and civic duty represents everything positive in the industry and sport of motorcycling." Dan is the owner of NC Machine and Tool in Winnipeg, Canada. One of Manitoba's elite custom motorcycle builders, Dan was selected for his commitment to



Grady Pfeiffer, Donnie Smith, Jessica Wells, and Paul Yaffe – Dan Roche's friends accepted the Chrome Heart Award from Jessica Wells of LifeScape on his behalf.

children served by LifeScape, as well as for his efforts to raise money for cancer research and education.

Hamsters USA has raised and donated funds at their annual meeting for the last ten years, wanting to give back to the greater Black Hills community, where they love to attend the annual Sturgis Rally. Their commitment to children with special needs has ensured that thousands of children over the years have received vital services. We thank Hamsters USA for making life better for kids in Western South Dakota!



Hamsters Recognition Wall at LifeScape Children's Care Services in Rapid City

Hamsters USA Raise \$221,504 For Special Kids At Children's Care In Rapid City, South Dakota

Published by Cyril Huze August 6th, 2013 in Builders, Customs, Editorial and Events.



Continued on Next Page



Proving again that bikers have big hearts for kids, the international motorcycle group Hamsters USA raised \$221,504 for Children's Care of Rapid City in fundraising events this year, culminating with their annual gathering in Spearfish during the Sturgis Rally on Monday, August 5th. Funds raised will provide physical, occupational, and speech therapies, plus psychological services, to hundreds of children in Western South Dakota—plus parts of Wyoming—through Children's Care of Rapid City.

Hamsters USA has raised and donated funds at their annual meeting each year, wanting to give back to the greater Black Hills community, which many Hamsters consider to be their second home. Their gifts help provide services to children in their own homes and communities, delivered by Children's Care personnel who drive over 10,000 miles a month

to provide services.



Urban Hirsch, III honored with annual Chrome Heart Award.

Hamster member Urban Hirsch, III received the Chrome Heart Award, presented by Children's Care to honor individuals in the motorcycle world "whose philanthropic support and civic duty represents everything positive in the industry and sport of motorcycling." Urban Hirsch, III is the founder and president of Ink Systems, Inc., based in southern California.

His interests outside the industry include a superb

antique motorcycle collection, and a fine art collection with a focus on lithographs and engravings, with some dating back more than 400 years. Urban was selected for the 2013 Chrome Heart Award not only for his commitment to the health and well-being of children in the Black Hills area, but also for his heavy involvement with the Casa Youth Shelter and the Inner City Arts Program in California.

The inscription on the award read:

For His Commitment To The Motorcycle Community And Especially For His Generosity And Dedication To The Health And Well-Being Of Children,
This 2013 Chrome Heart Award Is Presented To
Urban Hirsch, III
His Generous Spirit Has Given Those Less Fortunate Opportunities To Thrive And Create Their Dreams.
Presented By
Children's Care Hospital & School and Hamsters, USA
This Day Of August 5, 2013
Spearfish, South Dakota

Children's Care of Rapid City, SD, is affiliated with Children's Care Hospital & School, based in Sioux Falls. Children's Care is a private, independent, non-profit organization with a mission to help children with special needs reach their full potential. The organization as a whole served nearly 2,000 children last year.

ROSSMEYER FAMILY HONORED WITH CHROME HEART AWARD

The late Bruce Rossmeyer, who died in a traffic accident last year on July 30th on his way to the Sturgis Rally, was honored with the 5th annual Chrome Heart Award. Children's Care presents the Chrome Heart Award to "an individual in the motorcycle world whose philanthropic support and civic duty represents everything positive in the industry and sport of motorcycling." Rossmeyer was the owner of several Harley-Davidson dealerships in Florida, as well as in Colorado and Mississippi, and was the developer of the Destination Daytona and many motorcycle events. He was an active supporter of and generous donor to many children's charities, including Children's Care Hospital & School. The award was accepted by Rossmeyer's son, Will, of Ormond Beach, Florida.



Allstate Insurance Company donation: (left to right) Julie Parsons of Allstate, bike builder extraordinaire Dave Perewitz, Brian Bonde of the Children's Care Hospital & School Foundation, and Allstate representatives Mark LaNeve and Lisa Cochran.



Will Rossmeyer, left, accepted the Children's Care Chrome Heart Award honoring his late father, Bruce Rossmeyer. Presenting the award was Hamsters USA representative Grady Pfeiffer.





THE REAL BOYS OF SUMMER



Hamsters USA—Sturgis Motorcycle Rally 2009

If the heart of custom motorcycling can be understood or experienced anywhere, it is most likely within the Hamsters USA organization. This is a group that is bound together by the love of custom bikes and the desire to spend quality time and develop lifelong friendships with like-minded people. These are men that work hard and play well. They are clearly the most distinguished group of custom motorcycle enthusiasts in the world.

The founders are icons like Arlen Ness, Dave Perewitz, and Donnie Smith who are all absolute legends. As innovation has occurred and design evolved in the world of building bikes, Hamsters USA members have usually been involved in some way. During the past 40 years, the custom motorcycle hobby exploded from being largely enthusiasts working in their garages to an internationally significant business niche, and Hamsters USA members led the way. In the minds of many, the founding members of this group created this industry.

To understand the talent and passion of these men as it relates to custom motorcycles, all one has to do is study their work. If you are looking for one of the best bike shows in the world, head to the Holiday Inn in Spearfish on Thursday of the Sturgis Motorcycle Rally for the annual Hamsters USA ride to Sturgis. A walk around that parking lot is literally a walk around the world of custom motorcycling. Truly, the finest two-wheeled art in existence glimmers in the noon South Dakota sun.

When the Hamsters came to life in 1978, they were a group of riders, customizers and friends from around the country simply enjoying Bike Week in Daytona. They were merely celebrating friendship and a shared passion, and never intended to create an organization that would ultimately become so significant. The history of the evolution of the Hamsters USA organization is

clearly more one of finding friends along life's road than any planned development.

Today, more than 30 years later, it is still that same friendship and shared passion that defines this group. The camaraderie within the Hamsters USA organization is evident the moment one comes in contact with them. People from around the world are attracted to the Hamsters USA and their gatherings not just because of the prestige and knowledge of its members, but because it is so much fun to hang with these guys. There are approximately 300 members around the world now, and it is inspirational to see such real friendship and caring in a group so large—a group that sees the world as their playground.

For as mainstream as motorcycling has become, I suspect there are many people who look into this world and simply do not understand it. They see leather and tattoos and wind-blown hair, and somehow all that distraction makes it hard to see the men and women behind the machines. Perhaps the roar of the engines has somehow hidden the sound of the heart that beats so loudly and clearly in all these riders. The level of generosity and commitment to doing the right thing in this life as exhibited by the Hamsters USA group can only come from men with really good hearts.

To understand the true character of the Hamsters USA group, all one has to do is look at the relationship shared with the Children's Care Hospital and School and the many children whose lives have been so positively impacted by their generosity.

Children's Care Hospital and School specializes in helping special needs children achieve their greatest potential. The comprehensive set of services provided by CCH&S bridges the gap between medical, behavioral, rehabilitation, and educational demands of children with a wide variety of special needs.



What it means to be a Hamster

When Arlen, Barry, Dave, Donny, Ed, Jim and myself started the Hamsters in 1978 we never thought it would turn out like this...it's been a GREAT RIDE.—*Steve Allington*

It is hard to put in words what it means, but I can tell you what it feels like. It feels like family, brotherhood, and friendship! I get goose bumps every morning we all get out and fire up our hikes on our journeys to wherever! It is the best feeling riding with my brothers and being part of the universe in a way I could not have imagined when I would ride in the dirt as kid, dreaming of the day I could get a Low Rider FXR!!—*Paul Hughes*

I have been a Hamster member since 1996. During this time I have seen the great generosity and caring that the members have for each other and for others, but it really hit home when I had my heart attack. Last April I was in my backyard mowing my lawn when I fell over dead, I had thrown a clot in my right coronary artery. Luckily my neighbor saw me lying there next to my mower, ran to have my wife call 911, and then start CPR on me right away. His actions are what truly saved my life, along with the actions of the paramedics and hospital staff, but the actions of my Hamster brothers are what helped keep me going. During my stay in the hospital I received emails, cards, letters and phone calls from Hamsters from all over the country. Once I got home I started the really tough part of surviving a heart attack, the recovery and rehabilitation phase. I would look forward to checking my email and receiving phone calls on a daily basis from my Hamster brothers. Their care, sympathy and in some cases empathy, helped me keep a positive attitude, and even now almost a year after the heart attack I still get calls from Hamsters asking how I am doing. This club is about great people becoming great friends, having a fun time, riding custom motorcycles and truly caring for one another.—*Jorg Will*

I have been a Hamster since 1997. This is the only group I have ever belonged to and it is the only one I will ever belong to. It is a great group of people and best of all are the long lasting friendships.—*Randy Marten*

The night I became a Hamster I had tears of joy. I still get tingles to this day knowing I am a Hamster.—*Jim Flickinger*

The HAMSTERS are a brotherhood of guys that have the love for Custom Motorcycles and having a good time at heart. All HAMSTERS are equal no matter what they ride or what they do or don't do for a living. A HAMSTER never lets a fellow HAMSTER go thirsty and most of all a HAMSTER never leaves a fellow HAMSTER on the side of the road.—*Tom Aylott*

This year will be my 10th anniversary of being a Hamster. In this tenure I have experienced many highs and lows, however the strength of this brotherhood has been incredible. The friendship and camaraderie is beyond anything I have ever been involved with before. The outpouring of help and good wishes when I was seriously injured will never be forgotten. Just as we are all there for a fellow brother or sister in time of need we are there in time of fellowship and joy

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What it means to be a Hamster

(continued from Page 93)

and the common good to raise money for children in need. There is nothing better than to "party like a Hamster."—**Lee Wimmer**

Nothing more enjoyable to me than being surrounded by my brothers in yellow.—**Bobby Kavelac**

I'll make a stab at what it means to be a Hamster:

A few years ago several members of the Hamsters were riding to Sturgis out of Phoenix. We rode directly out of the Maricopa heat on highway 17, into the San Francisco Mountains and Flagstaff. Three riders were Hamsters; the other was Terry, who talked incessantly about becoming a Hamster. He was a full-grown man with serious professional and personal accomplishments under his hand-tooled leather belt, but becoming a Hamster seemed the essence of his being.

The next morning we headed north out off the pine strewn Arizona Snowbowl on 89 heading due north. As the road straightened, we poured the coals to our motors. At over 90mph, our vests flapping like wild bullwhips, we passed every 4-wheeled obstacle on the straight ribbon of asphalt leading into the Painted Desert.

As we passed a caravan of boat towing tourists, Terry's large new Ultra Classic experienced a notorious high-speed earthquake. The devastating wobble yanked the handlebars from his grip. The heavy touring model spit from side to side like a 2000-pound hull trying desperately to buck its 100-pound rider. The teetering machine exploded perpendicular to the yellow stripe, into oncoming traffic and ejected Terry toward the sky, then followed twisting airborne.

Terry slapped the pavement on his back against the hot unforgiving asphalt, sliding against the abrasive surface. Fortunately, the detonating motorcycle cleared his limp body, as all his gear exploded from his saddlebags and tour pack, like shrapnel from a hand grenade. Cars, and motorcycles careened to avoid the accident. Terry came to a stop, just off the edge of the highway as the brothers rushed to his side. One of the Hamsters was a doctor, Dr. Hamster, who carefully checked Terry's vital signs and limbs for fractures. He was a mess of road rash and debris, but he opened his eyes and looked up at Bandit, a brother from Los Angeles.

"Will I still get my yellow shirt?" were the first words out of his mouth.

Bandit pulled a whiskey flask from his leather vest took a long swig, offered the polished engraved stainless container to his brother, and turned to the broken and bloody man lying helplessly on the harsh asphalt.

"Get off your ass Terry, we're burnin' daylight."—**Keith Ball**

I've often thought about what it means to be a Hamster. I grew up in the town of Donnelly, Minnesota where Donnie grew up. Is it a very small farm community in West Central Minnesota, population of about 200 people. Donnie is 9 years older than I am so as a kid I didn't chase with Donnie but I would always know when he was home because he would always have a fantastic motorcycle he would be riding and always have friends along with their "big" Harleys. It wasn't until I was about 45 that I purchased my first Harley and my decision was based upon a recommendation from Donnie.





Hamsters USA member Larry Page receives Children's Care Chrome Heart Award. (L to R) Brian Bonde, Dave Perewitz, Donny Smith, Larry Page, Grady Pfeiffer, Arlen Ness, and Arlin Fatland.

Children's Care has a staff of approximately 480 people that includes physicians, nurses, physical therapists, occupational therapists, speech therapists, teachers, psychologists, and dietary specialists. They are a talented group of professionals dedicated to the special needs of these children with an interdisciplinary approach that means all of the child's needs are considered and treated in a coordinated effort.

The Sturgis Motorcycle Rally is a homecoming of sorts for Hamsters USA members and each year they meet in Spearfish, South Dakota to ride, party, and enjoy the company of old and new friends alike. As part of that gathering, a silent fund-raising auction for Children's Care Hospital and School is included in the festivities. It is a charity that is quite close to the collective heart of this group.

A group of Hamsters USA "captains and friends" from around the country go about the process of having items donated for the auction. Many members of the Hamsters USA group are so very talented and because of their dedication to this fund raising effort, very fine hand-crafted items are donated as well. The auction has been so successful that money raised in just a few short years for this great charity is expected to surpass the one-million dollar

mark in 2010. Last year, the auction raised more than \$295,000.00 in one great night by this one amazing group!

Hamsters USA spokesman Grady Pfeiffer reflected, "As a group, we are committed to helping these kids and it is great to know that each and every dollar we raise goes directly to them. It is really hard to put into words the joy in the eyes of these Hamsters as they watch the money roll in to support these special needs children. It truly is all about the kids."

It is good to know that some things will never change even as the world spins madly on, and that is the story of the Hamsters USA organization. Motivation comes from many places during our lives and I think that for this group it is mostly about having a place in this world where they belong and being a part of something that can only be described as a brotherhood.

The financial generosity to charity by the Hamsters USA group is both impressive and important, but giving comes in many different forms. This is a group that gives in many other ways and the impact is profound. This group has made enormous contributions to the world of motorcycling in every possible way. Most important though, they give of themselves as friends through the good times and the bad times, and that may be their true legacy...✿



What it means to be a Hamster

The past 15 years or so I have gotten to really know Donnie and must say that his roots are deep and his commitment to our small Donnelly community is not only noteworthy but sincerely appreciated.

Donnie was my Hamster sponsor and I was inducted into the organization in August of 2002. All this being said I would say that what being a Hamster means to me is "It means that I have been blessed to share the experience of knowing, riding, socializing and participating with an organization which includes the pioneers of the custom motorcycle industry and people from all walks of life whom I call my brothers and sisters!" —Paul "Butch" Ersted

I appreciate this opportunity to share a bit of my personal experience with a great group of friends called the Hamsters. I have been a member of this group since 1981 and have been to the Sturgis Rally for more than 36 years. I missed a couple of years when in Vietnam, but have been able to make up for last time. I was going to the Rally with my father who rode an old Harley and we would make the trip to the Black Hills with three other families of which all the dads rode and we camped in the old Sturgis City Park.

That is where I first heard of this group called the "older true legendary and what I consider super Hamster breed" with members like Donnie Smith, Happy Smith, Arlin Fatland, Arlen Ness, "Big Steve" Allington, Dave Perewitz, and Barry Cooney. During those earlier years when I was not a Hamster, Donnie Smith always seemed to have competitive drag races on the stretch leaving Sturgis City Park eastward which during those early years was the real highlight of the Rally for me.

In fact when we would camp out in City Park I would run into these guys at the shower where the drain wouldn't work too well. In fact it was highly toxic but then again we didn't care as it was hot water in those days. I do know at night back in the late fifties and early 60's everything was happening in Deadwood and we always made sure to pitch our tents next to trees, as bikers will run over a tent and the poor soul in a sleeping bag. Most would remain sober enough to not hit a tree; there were exceptions.

I apologize for getting too wordy in this email, but it is hard not to with this group. I remember that Arlin Fatland would bring his van full of beer and steaks and we would go to the Pactola reservoir for the BBQ. The word in the Black Hills was you knew "The Hamsters" had been there because of the ring around the lake after they left. You will not find anyone nicer than the Smith brothers and the other original founding members. *Hamsters Forever ~ Forever Hamsters—Manny Montanez*

It is impossible to describe what being a Hamster is like. However, it is the most unique feeling of Camaraderie, Passion, Friendship, Brotherhood, Generosity, Fun and Endless Stories of the Past and of the Future. When you are invited in, You Know it! —(Arian Schilling)

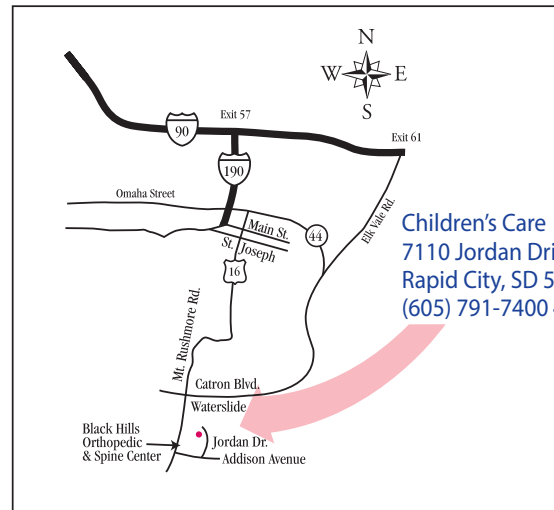
Chrome Heart Award recognizes bikers with big hearts

Tonight Children's Care will present the second annual Chrome Heart Award, recognizing an individual in the motorcycle world whose philanthropic support and civic duty represents everything positive in the industry and sport of motorcycling.

Last year's award went to the late Hamster P.J. Otten, accepted by his wife Sheri and their daughters.



Children's Care welcomes your visit



Children's Care
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Hamsters fund playground & learning center at Black Hills children's center

The Children's Care mission to children & families

Children's Care Hospital & School, established in 1952 in Sioux Falls and expanded to Rapid City in 1985, believes that all children deserve to reach their greatest potential.

As an independent, non-profit organization, we offer a broad continuum of healthcare and educational services for children from birth through age 21.

Children's Care in Rapid City offers developmental screenings, consultations, and direct care in speech, physical and occupational therapy; special education; psychology/behavioral challenges; and assistive technology.

Children's Care provides family-centered programs on an outpatient and outreach basis, providing services on-site and in homes and schools throughout western South Dakota and areas of Wyoming and Nebraska. Our staff of 22 serves about 1200 children annually.

Last August, Children's Care in Rapid City completed construction of a new facility to replace rented space that no longer met the demand of children needing services.

Members of Hamsters USA were instrumental in the raising of funds for this facility. In honor of this group of big-hearted bikers, the Learning & Conference Center, as well as the playground area, is named for the Hamsters, with the logo displayed in both areas.

Thank you for helping kids have a fighting chance in life!



Children's Care staff in Rapid City often use the playground during nice weather as an alternative site for providing therapies. Here speech language pathologist Heather Bradley has 11-year-old John Thelen of Rapid City perform speech drills while going down the slide. The playground equipment at Children's Care in Rapid City was purchased with two very generous donations from members of Hamsters, USA—Larry Page of Virginia, and Richard and Ann Harrison of Oklahoma City, OK.