

MOTORCYCLING: IT'S A SOCIAL GOOD

Do Your Part And Ride

Those who live in climates that allow year-round motorcycle riding, may not be able to relate to the seasonal affective disorder that afflicts motorcyclists who are unable to partake in their chosen form of transportation or recreation during the winter months.

According to information readily available on the Internet, symptoms of the disorder typically begin in the late fall, continue throughout the winter and go away during the early days of spring and summer. Some of the symptoms include irritability, grumpiness, tiredness, appetite changes and weight gain. Now, it is not my intention to make light of true clinical depression, but I can say without a doubt that the lack of motorcycling during the winter adversely affects my mood and productivity. And if I blame putting on a few extra pounds over the winter on not being able to ride, who could blame me?

This year's long winter, with lots of snow and ice, gave way to a fair amount of rain with temperatures around the freezing mark. I don't mind the cold because you can dress for it, but I am not a fan of riding when there's a potential for black ice. Although I did get a few days of motorcycle commuting in before then, it wasn't until the first week of spring that I was able to get in any serious road riding.

At the end of March, the AMA Board of Directors held a strategic planning retreat near the Tail of the Dragon in North Carolina. There is nothing like several hundred miles of riding to pull you out of the winter doldrums.

Although we did some adventure riding in North Carolina, I had to wait until opening day of the trail system in the Wayne National Forest on April 15 for my first trail ride of the year. A great day of trail riding with other members of the AMA staff who ride off-road was just what the doctor ordered.

The AMA has a longstanding relationship with the Wayne National Forest. In fact, we have a Memorandum of Understanding with the forest to promote safe and legal motorized trail use and to educate riders about protecting natural resources and caring for the land. As part of that, schedules permitting, we attend opening day and ride to show our support. This year, the weather couldn't have been better. (This isn't always the case. In 2014,



By Rob Dingman

it snowed with temperatures in the low 30s.)

On our inaugural ride this year, I was reminded how important it is for all of us who ride off road to support conservation and responsible stewardship of the land. Off-highway riding provides wholesome family-oriented outdoor recreation that not only makes us feel better but helps us

pass on a respect for the land, plants and wildlife. The best way to foster a strong appreciation for these resources is to learn to enjoy them in responsible ways.

Motorcycling is not just good for putting us in a better mood and for our psyche. It is good for our overall wellbeing. Former AMA Board member and founder of Aerostich/RiderWearHouse Andy Goldfine talks about riding as a social good, similar to eating healthy, daily exercise and the pursuit of higher education. He says that riding motorcycles makes us stronger, clears our minds, and makes us smarter and sharper. In addition to improving our mental acuity, motorcycling enables us to travel from one place to another leaving a smaller "footprint" on the world around us. Motorcycling also saves time and reduces congestion and uses fewer natural resources.

Andy is also the inspiration and key organizer for the annual worldwide "Ride to Work Day" (see page 16). The 24th Annual International Motorcycle and Scooter Ride to Work Day is Monday, June 15. The day promotes the use of motorcycles and scooters for transportation. All motorcyclists and scooter riders are encouraged to ride to work that day to demonstrate to the general public the utility of riding.

You've probably heard the adage that you never see a motorcycle parked at a psychiatrist's office. There is some truth behind that saying. Motorcycling is not just good for society as a whole, but it's good for you as an individual.

There's another reason to ride your motorcycle—whether you ride it to work, to explore the country, to relax on the weekends or to compete for local glory or AMA national No. 1 plates. Ride to protect your rights. One of the easiest ways to lose a freedom is to stop exercising it. So, get out there on your motorcycle. Lessen your impact on the environment. Reduce road congestion. Spend less money on fuel. Reduce your stress level. Have fun. Enjoy your right to ride.

While you're doing it, you'll plant the seeds of motorcycling's benefits in the minds of all those non-riders who see you on the road. Who knows? One day they might join you. Hopefully they do. We'll all be better off for it.

Rob Dingman is AMA president and chief executive officer.

Left to right: AMA staffers Jeff Massey, Rob Dingman, Heather Wilson and Michael Jolly enjoy 2015 opening day at Wayne National Forest in Ohio.



James Hötter