



Motorcycle riders Scott Rosey, left, Aaron Barry, right, and Keith Reed ride in the Race for Relief at the BeaveRun Motor Sports track in Big Beaver. The ride benefited the American Red Cross's hurricane relief fund.

Robin Rombach/
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Fund raising on track

Westmoreland-based sport bike team rides laps for Katrina relief

By Brian David
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Empty Pockets Racing lives up to its name.

There's a saying that if you want to make a little money racing, start with a lot of money," Keith Reed, a member of the Westmoreland-based sport bike team, said Tuesday.

Despite the forever-tight funds, Keith Reed, of Allegheny Township, and his partner, Aaron Barry, of Lower Burrell, didn't wince when they got a call from sport bike enthusiast Mike Seate a couple of weeks ago.

Seate, of Osborne, was organizing a fund-raiser for Hurricane Katrina relief. They'd ride laps at BeaveRun Raceway in Beaver Run and get sponsors to pay so much per lap.

"We thought it was an awesome idea — right up our alley," Seate said.

Seate has a list of 95 to 100 people and reports on Empty Pockets efforts on the club racing website, and he sent them all an e-mail asking for sponsorship.

When it was a matter of showing up at BeaveRun Tuesday, Seate dug out with some like-

amount his team raised, since he was waiting for some possible corporate matching funds, but he thought the Empty Pockets donation would be about \$4,500.

That puts the team well short of the day's champion, however. Larry Grodsky, of Squirrel Hill, raised almost \$6,000.

Grodsky runs Stayin Safe, a rider training business, writes a column for Rider magazine and organizes sport bike tours in various parts of the country. The tours will start in a major city and head into the countryside for a three-day back road jaunt — one from Pittsburgh heads into the rolling hills of southern Ohio.

"I have a lot of generous clients," he said of his large contribution.

The 15 riders in Tuesday's event raised almost \$25,000, according to Kimberlee Love, business manager of West Hills Honda and Seate's wife.

Others who participated came from varied backgrounds.

Glen Goldman, of Team Promotion, for instance, came in a sleek trailer from the Philadelphia suburb of Warminster. A former professional racer, he is a

consultant for West Hills Honda, who said he hadn't had a bike on a racetrack since 1995.

It showed on the track as other riders yowled past Hesch's little red Honda. Riders went out in 15-minute sessions, with a fast group and a slow group taking turns.

"I didn't mind being passed so much," Hesch said with a grin, after pulling in from his first session, "but it did bother me a little when [Seate] passed me twice!"

Hesch, however, topped the day's list when it came to overall contributions to the relief effort — he and his wife are taking their recreational vehicle to the Gulf area, where she will work as a nurse and he will work as a mechanic.

"We were going to go south anyway, so we thought, 'Hey, why not volunteer?'" Hesch said.

Hesch is a longtime motorcycle enthusiast who owned Northgate Honda for 18 years. When their children grew up, he and his wife started traveling extensively, and in 2001, he sold his dealership so they could live full time from their RV.

Hesch said when his wife made inquiries into the need for nurses

decided to use his contacts within the sport to do something.

"Harley riders do a lot of charity events, largely because they've gotten so much bad PR over the years," he said. "Sport bike riders haven't done that much because they haven't had the bad press. But I thought this time maybe we could."

One problem with sport bike events is that riding them at anything close to capacity on the road is illegal and dangerous. They are blisteringly fast machines that corner like amusement park rides, racing vehicles that are designed to run on racing tracks.

BeaveRun, a 4-year-old facility in Big Beaver, took care of that part, donating track time, an ambulance and workers — a total value of about \$5,400.

The riders were thrilled to get track time and delighted to help a worthy cause while hanging out with other enthusiasts.

"The camaraderie in the club racing scene is just great," said Scott Rosey, of Cecil. "I think that's conveyed in what [Seate] has put together."

Rosey, who just got into the sport after riding dirt bikes all