

BFR - San Michele Charity Ride – 13 Nov 2011

We are such a merry group of people.

We have Harley Nights at the dealership where we eat and drink, listen to music, chat with friends and if you get there early you can even do a bit of bling shopping. We have our regular breakfast runs where we ride our polished Harleys; we wear our colours with pride together with all the bling we bought at the dealership and we eat breakfast whilst we talk about the good times. We do rallies, glamorous events where we eat and drink and have the most wonderful times and talk about our stunningly expensive Iron Horses and how great it is to belong to HOG. And we plan our new upgrade bike because we have worked hard and we deserve to spoil ourselves a little. We are indeed a merry bunch.

And then one day we come back to mother earth for just a short while. We ride to a place where there is no bling, no Harleys, no expensive dinners or colours or looking forward to the next bike, or rally. There are 200 guys and girls who just do not have. They do not have the ability to earn enough money to buy themselves nice things, or even enough money to buy food. They don't have the ability to take care of themselves. They basically have nothing. Must be a depressing bunch of people with nothing to smile or laugh about.

Wrong. They are just so happy to be. They practised for weeks to do this concert for us and they burst onto the stage with gusto and joy. They could master only small things – little dance steps, waving of pom-poms, clapping rhythmically with the music (mostly). But they loved it. I have seldom seen such enjoyment and expression of sheer fun in a group of performers. An elderly coupled lip synched a golden oldie with gestures and facial expressions to match. The microphone was never even close to his mouth at any time during the song, but it didn't matter – he was so committed to the song and his partner and he was enjoying himself. There was a drummer who rarely hit the right beat, but who didn't care as he was so proud to be chosen as the drummer and to be part of this exciting event with his buddies. The guy in the wheelchair who lip synched a love song to his lady. Did he know that he may never experience that what he was singing about. Did the thought depress him? Hell no, he was giving it his all.

So see, even if they will never be able to work and earn money to buy Harleys and experience the joy of riding and belonging to a HOG family, they are a family who love each other and have people that care for them and love them. They don't need money to buy bling. They need love and acknowledgement. And they need that family environment to keep on being there for them. And HOG Pretoria Chapter has done a little bit to help them with that.

There is nothing wrong with being a merry bunch, or spoiling ourselves a little because we do work hard. Let us just keep on sharing some of the spoils with the guys and the girls who do not have. Next year HOG Pretoria will support another charity and we will help someone else. But I will never forget the real performers of San Michele.

San Michele serves the whole community by providing an essential non-denominational home for intellectually & physically disabled people. The home provides professional care as well as a family environment. San Michele opened its doors for the first time in 1945, caring for 6 intellectually disabled children. Today, 64 years later, they provide a home for 200 permanent residents who are intellectually disabled plus 10 day care disabled people. There is 96 dedicated staff- many with over 30 years service with San Michele.

