



Columbus Alive

Harley Hangout

By Brittany Kress, March 6 2008



Bike season kicks off this weekend — unless the 20-degree forecast comes true — and riders couldn't be more anxious.

The store floor at C&A Harley-Davidson, lined with motorcycles so glossy you don't want to touch them, isn't as full as usual because sales have been up in advance of March. And the staff hopes you'll give in and put your greasy little fingers all over the bikes.

"Harley dealerships are Chuck E. Cheese for adults," said Alexa McAllister, the Dublin-area store's director of marketing and promotions. "Regardless of if you ride, regardless of if you come from a riding family, there's fun, shiny toys for everyone to play with everywhere."

WILL SHILLING PHOTO

Of the dozens of motorcycles available, prices range from a \$7,000 beginner's Harley to a \$35,000 model.

McAllister hopes more of those toys will take to the streets with today's start of the store's Rider's Edge training program, a four-day series of safety and skills classes that ends with a test. Once they've passed, participants can get their license.



Rider's Edge is one way the staff at C&A — an operation owned and managed by a mother-daughter pair — is taking seriously the effort to prove that most riders don't fit the Hells Angels stereotype.

Women make up 10 percent of Harley customers on average, McAllister said, but at C&A, it's more like 15. The staff pays attention to that growing customer base in both service and selection.

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"When I tell people I ride, they would never assume it," said McAllister, a tall, thin blonde, "but you can be this rebel without a cause, and then during the day you can be whatever young professional or professional that you are. That's the mystique of it."

The clothing and accessories section, which fills the other half of the warehouse-like store, holds everything from protective MotorClothes that can color-coordinate with a bike and pillows, to belt buckles and "Born to be a Biker" onesies.

Harley has slapped its logo on virtually every clothing and household item, and C&A has expanded offerings that might entice shoppers to drift over to bikes, McAllister said.



Affliction, a line with skull and cross images, has been seen on various celebs lately, and Sinful, the line's women's counterpart, is arriving in the store this spring.

Along the back walls, the staff recently grouped bike parts by family to make shopping a bit more beginner-friendly.

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Garage parties and other social gatherings at the store — a date night is in the works — also engage customers, McAllister added. "We want people to see this as a hangout."

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