

Chicago Sun-Times

Dierks Bentley enjoying the ride for kids' charity

By Tricia Despres
October 5, 2011



Dierks Bentley

When country music megastar Dierks Bentley moved to Nashville at the age of 19, he was looking for a job, a place to live ... and a bike.

"I bought a mid-1980s Honda [motorcycle] for 500 bucks," he says, fresh off a recent appearance on "Late Night with Jimmy Fallon." "I grew up riding dirt bikes and go-carts, but I had never ridden a bike before."

From that moment on, his love affair with motorcycles would continue, eventually leading to a 2003 Harley-Davidson that these days can be found traveling inside a trailer behind his tour bus. And while he professes that his love of riding gives him something to do before a concert, it also played an important role in igniting

the idea of a charity event that would incorporate his love of motorcycles and his desire to raise money for kids.

Since its inception more than six years ago, the multicity "Miles and Music for Kids" event has raised more than \$1.6 million for Children's Miracle Network hospitals.

This year marks the first Chicago stop for the family-friendly event, and Miles & Music's fastest advance sell-out in its six-year history.

On Oct. 9, riders will depart from Fox River Harley-Davidson in St. Charles and embark on a 90-minute ride to Joe's Bar in Chicago, where riders and fans will unite at a one-of-a-kind street festival. Once there, Bentley will take the stage and jam with country music pals such as Eli Young Band and Jerrod Niemann, with proceeds going directly to Children's Memorial Hospital in Chicago.

"I was totally shocked that Chicago was a sell-out," says Bentley, who plans to release his sixth Capitol Nashville album early next year. "I've always had a great relationship with the city and Joe's Bar, so it just seemed natural to bring the event there. Giving my fans the chance to buy tickets and know that the money is going right back into their community ... it just makes me feel really good."

As a father of two, Bentley says that having the chance to raise money for kids is something he holds very close to his heart.

"I feel very fortunate to have two wonderful kids that were born healthy," says Bentley, who recently scored his eighth No. 1 hit, "Am I the Only One." "I go into these hospitals and sling my guitar around my neck and everyone thinks we are lifting the spirits of these kids. But in reality, we always walk out the door and realize that they in fact lifted our spirits."

And while motorcycle riders can often get a bad rap, Bentley says he has seen their true spirit of giving through these sorts of charity events.

"These bikers dress tough with their leather and tattoos, but they are the nicest folks you can meet," he says. "I've been lucky to have some No. 1 hits, but looking behind me and seeing all these riders behind me and supporting this cause? That is what I call an incredible feeling."