



Portland



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Bikers from far and wide to converge for Ayla Reynolds charity event



Ayla Reynolds

AP

By Christopher Cousins, BDN Staff
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PORTLAND, Maine — Motorcyclists from across Maine will gather for a charity ride in support of missing toddler [Ayla Reynolds](#) on Saturday.

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[Big Moose Harley-Davidson](#) of Portland and [LostNMissing Inc.](#), an organization that supports the families of missing people in Maine and beyond, have collaborated to sponsor a [“Ride for Ayla.”](#) which will converge at the motorcycle dealership at 12:30 p.m. Saturday. Kimberly Curless, a promotions manager for Big Moose, said that anyone, regardless of what kind of motorcycle they ride or whether they ride a motorcycle at all, is welcome to attend.

“We do support a lot of nonprofit organizations, but we have never done anything like this,” said Curless. “This is certainly the most heavy-hearted event we’ve ever done.”

Reynolds was 20 months old when she was reported missing on Dec. 17, 2011, by her father, Justin DiPietro of Waterville. The search for her, which ranks as one of the largest in Maine State Police history, has attracted intense attention in Maine and beyond, but there has been no sign of the little girl.

Stephen McCausland, a spokesman for the Maine Department of Public Safety, said Tuesday that detectives are still following leads in her disappearance and conducting interviews, but that tips in the case have slowed to a trickle in recent months. Police have said they believe Reynolds is [no longer alive](#), but there have been no arrests.

“This case will not close until we find her, period,” said McCausland.

Curless said the idea for the Ride for Ayla originated with Jeff Hansen, who is Ayla’s maternal step-grandfather and a motorcycle enthusiast.

“Jeff is one of our customers and he just came in one day and said, ‘Here are my thoughts,’” said Curless. “Then one thing just led to another.”

Bikers are encouraged to start the ride on Saturday from wherever they choose. The afternoon will be spent at Big Moose Harley-Davidson at 375 Riverside St. in Portland. Radio station 107.5 Frank FM will be on site for a remote broadcast and Big Moose is hosting a \$5-per-person barbecue beginning at 1 p.m. LostNMissing and other organizations will participate with a booth at the event, where they will distribute safety information for the public and collect donations.

All proceeds from the event will be given to LostNMissing, which has been working closely with Reynolds’ maternal family since her disappearance. There also will be family members of other missing people, along with a special table for Ayla.

Producers from a cable television show called [Ridin’ Steel](#) have been promoting the event and will cover it Saturday. Curless said the show’s involvement usually results in a heavy biker turnout.

LostNMissing will raffle off a range of items and accept donations of any amount. Anyone who wishes to donate gift baskets or other items, send a donation in absentia or ask any question whatsoever can contact Curless at 650-2115.

Riders for Ayla in the Lewiston/Auburn area can start their ride from LA Harley and Central Maine Motor Sports, where a blood drive for the American Red Cross is taking place from 8:30 a.m. to 2 p.m. Anyone who donates blood at that location will receive a Red Sox T-shirt. Other stores participating in the ride kickoff include Reynolds MotorSports in Buxton; North Country Harley-Davidson in Augusta; Central Maine PowerSports in Lewiston; Central Maine Harley-Davidson in Hermon and Bangor; and Bentley’s Saloon in Arundel.

Curless said she doesn’t have an estimate of how many people might participate,

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but that she has been bombarded with calls for several days. She said the dealership has arranged for overflow parking and is prepared to serve 1,000 people or more at the barbecue.

McCausland said investigators are appreciative of any event for Ayla's benefit and that he has been impressed with the power of bikers when they gather for a common cause, such as the annual Toy Run by the United Bikers of Maine.

"If they can participate in something that has some meaning, it's a good thing," he said. "It's good to keep her name out there in any way possible."

More information about Ayla can be found at www.aylareynolds.com.

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