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Motorcycle training course offered for women

By Jenny Amaral / The Daily Item

LYNNFIELD - For motorcycle enthusiasts, there's nothing like getting out on the open road and driving for miles, but more often than not, those open roads aren't perfectly paved and reserved solely for operators of the two-wheeled vehicle. It can be a rather dangerous means of transportation, especially for the untrained.

To help make for a smoother, safer ride, Lynnfield resident and avid rider Jay Duchin, co-founder of the Women's Riding School, and his business partner Judy Mirro, have organized a day to properly train female riders in a comfortable, enclosed, and most importantly, testosterone-free environment.

"It's typically a very male-dominated event," said Duchin, relating a standard track day to purchasing a car at a dealership. "(Women) don't get treated (the same) as if a man were to go in there. That feeling and intensity is amplified during a track day."

The idea for a women-only course began with a New Hampshire bike shop on the verge of closing its doors.

"Three years ago, the shop was sold and someone had to take over the legacy," said Duchin. "That's where I worked with Judy to take it over and make it into something more."

The two took the women's training day idea that was already in place, changed the name, and made the academic aspect stronger. They also added restrictions to what bikes were allowed to participate and integrated safety requirements.

"The only two major requirements are simple," said Duchin. "The bike has to be in good shape (plenty of tire left, no hanging parts) and you have to have the full, proper safety equipment (full-face helmet, full-coverage gloves and boots.) We don't want to see any skin."

Duchin said approximately 60 women participate each year.

"It's interesting because we're the only one of its kind in the country, as far as we know, the only one in the world," he said. "To get advanced training for motorcyclists, there really aren't a lot of options...They're either not that good or focused on racing."

On Monday, July 28 from 7:30 a.m. to 5:30 p.m., participants will learn everything about operating a motorcycle, from breaking and making turns to overcoming hills and avoiding hazards both in a classroom setting and hands-on along a 1.6 mile course. Certified instructors will work one-on-one with students, young and old, experienced and beginners. This year's guest instructor is motorcycle journalist Ken Condon from Motorcycle Consumer News.

"We teach people to see things they don't normally see," said Duchin said. "Their car driving improves, too because they're looking around everywhere. We teach them to spot hazards and how to react to those hazards."

All techniques aside, Duchin said the most important thing participants walk away with after the course is confidence.

"They find that their skill level has improved enormously," he said. "They're no longer as nervous about certain turns."

This year's offering takes place at the New Hampshire Motor Speedway in Loudon, N.H. It begins with a meet and greet dinner Sunday night where riders can ask questions and calm their fears of the track. Registration costs \$250 and includes training and a healthy lunch.

For more information, log on to www.womensridingschool.com; or call Jay Duchin at 781-334-5068.

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