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BikePAC rolls motorcycle awareness into PFHS

Group promotes safety with rider education, public awareness

By Maureen Dolan
Staff writer

Post Falls- Mike Martin learned there is more to motorcycle safety than he thought in his driver's education class at Post Falls High School on Thursday.

The sophomore was one of about 30 students who attended a motorcycle awareness driver's education class presented by Willie Stephenson and Tim Herzog of BikePAC of Idaho, a nonprofit organization created to champion issues concerning motorcyclists and promote motorcycle safety through rider education and public awareness.

"I learned a lot about things I never thought about before, like how you have more obstacles to look out for and how much easier it is to lose control when you're on a motorcycle," he said.

Both Stephenson and Herzog spoke to the class about issues affecting both motorcycle riders and automobile drivers. Photos were shown highlighting the size difference between a car and a motorcycle.

The pictures showed a damaged vehicle that had been hit by a motorcycle with the front and rear ends of the vehicle nearly intact and the remains of the damaged motorcycle strewn across the center of the vehicle. According to Herzog, the crash happened a few years ago and resulted in fatalities.

Students learned about right of way and how it affects motorcyclists.

They also learned why motorcycle riders wear leather for safety.

"Has anyone ever had road rash?" Stephenson asked the class and several students raised their hands.

Stephenson explained that "road rash" is an injury that occurs when a person's body hits the road and gravel and dirt are driven under the skin. "That's why people on motorcycles wear leather jackets," Stephenson said. "It's not to be tough. It's not to look mean. It's to protect them from road rash."

Stephenson said that anyone riding a motorcycle should always wear long pants, gloves and shoes, preferably boots that ride over the ankle and never sandals or flip-flops. He stressed the importance of wearing a helmet.

"There are riders who get all leathered up and have a tendency to feel invincible," Stephenson said.

"Protective equipment is a tool to use, not an excuse to ride recklessly."

Herzog has been riding a motorcycle since 1969 and has crashed a few times, learning the value of the "two-second rule" the hard way. The two-second rule is a safety guideline suggesting the minimum distance traveled in two seconds.

Both Herzog and Stephenson have been involved in motorcycle awareness and safety since the late 1980's and are looking forward coordinating more classes in area high schools.

The BikePAC organization was formed last year and is in need of members willing to help promote the group's message in the schools.

Information: www.bikepacofidaho.org or 777-1915.