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Superintendent's Column
Public Schools of Robeson County
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Lady bikers ride to raise money for elementary schools throughout the district

During the regular school year, Janet Woodell teaches high school students history at Lumberton High School. Rubelena Hunt Locklear teaches Physical Education at Union Elementary and Robbie Locklear is a secretary at Lumberton Senior High School. In August, the three donned their pink Spirit Riders shirts and pulled out Harley Davidsons to ride to raise money for Deep Branch Elementary. The three school employees are members of the Spirit Riders Bike Ministry Club. The group coordinated almost 200 bikers to ride to raise money for an outdoor classroom at Deep Branch. This is the second year the bikers have raised money for an elementary school in the Public Schools of Robeson County. "We are a group of women who have been together for about 3 years. We just started out one day just riding together on a girl's day out, just to ride and we turned it into a group. What we wanted to do is have a platform of what we could do for some of the communities and some of the girls in our group are teachers, so we kind of geared it to that since there was nothing already out there pending as far as rides", said Lucinda Callahan.

Lucinda Callahan founded the women's group, which now has 17 members in the Spirit Riders Bike Club. Their goal to reach out to students is being heeded by bikers from throughout the Southeast. Around 200 bikers rode the three-mile run from Pembroke to Deep Branch Elementary. The bikers turned out in record numbers to raise money for the school to build an outdoor classroom and fund a Backpack food program for children in need. Gregg Locklear said the run is a good excuse to ride his hog, but it is the right thing to do. "Anytime that we as a community can work together to help out our school, then there should be no question about participation. Finances are in short supply and our state doesn't have the monies to buy all the needed supplies for all of our schools. So all that we can do as individuals or as a community is time and energy well spent," said Locklear.

Deep Branch Elementary School principal Nikki Brooks said the outdoor classroom is something she has looked at for a long time. "It is an awesome opportunity to have the community come together and do something for the school. The classroom is a gazebo-type building classroom for students to have class outside. They will be able to have fresh air, observe nature and plant flowers and the backpack program is for children who are in need. It gives them snacks to carry home on the weekend," said Brooks.

Last year the bikers club raised \$6700 for Union Elementary School. At the end of August the organization will present their check to Deep Branch. This year the lady bikers have a goal to go beyond the amount for Deep Branch and donations are still pouring in. The members say it is a way to give back

to the community. “We knew there were programs such as collecting books and supplies, but there was still something more that we felt like we could do, so after we met with Union Elementary last year and we found out there were some programs they wanted to have with their schools and they needed the money to fund those programs, we decided that is what this fundraiser would be geared toward,” said Callahan.