



PETE VIZZA/THE TRIBUNE-DEMOCRAT

Dave Glaser of New York (left), Rick Hall of Colorado (center), and Gary Murphy of Kentucky talk motorcycles outside the Holiday Inn, 250 Market St., Johnstown, yesterday. They are here for Concours Owners Group's Flood City National.

Rally in the valley

Kawasaki Concours owners roar into city

By LINDSAY MIESKO
FOR THE TRIBUNE-DEMOCRAT

It might not be thunder, but Concours Owners Group is making a rumble in Johnstown this week.

The group, exclusive for admirers of the Kawasaki Concours, began trickling in Monday for the Flood City National rally at Holiday Inn, 250 Market St., Johnstown.

"This is different from other biker events like Thunder in the Valley because it's for our club based on a specific model," said Jason Kaplitz of Dale Borough, this year's rally coordinator.

The Concours created enough hoopla to produce its own club because it has not changed much from its original 1986 design, he said.

"There's none of this trying to keep up with the Joneses," Kaplitz said. "It's kind of like a Volkswagen Beetle. The one that you bought 20 years ago still looks like the one you would buy today."

Kaplitz bought a Concours during its first year of manufacture.

He gave up the Concours in 1993 and now has three other bikes, two BMWs and a Yamaha.

But he said he's still welcome to ride with the pack.

"People join because of the bike, but they really stay for the friends," he said.

Russell Fleming, the group's assistant area director for Maryland and Pennsylvania, agreed.

"I've been going to these rallies for 14 years," Fleming said. "We all come out to see old friends and meet new friends."

The more than 300 participants riding to the rally are ready and eager to patronize local businesses, he said.

"This group is different because we're definitely a riding club," Kaplitz said. "We spend our day riding and sightseeing. We're not walking around town looking at other bikes."

The Concours group takes



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Frank and Julie Howell of Zanesville, Ohio, set off for a ride through downtown Johnstown.

safety very seriously, he added.

"I can safely say that 99 percent of our riders are wearing their safety gear," Kaplitz said.

"There was one guy who said, 'It's not a sport if it can kill you.'

"And we know that this can be dangerous, so we take it very seriously."

The group's itinerary includes everything from swap meets and tech sessions to scheduled bike tours to State College.

Bikers are occupying 160 of Holiday Inn's 180 rooms.

If they don't want to sleep, they can pop down to an all-night biker movie marathon being held each night.



Kaplitz