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Great Lakes shows continue to roll; So will Boaterz n Bikerz

NORM SCHULTZ • MAR 19, 2019

Boat shows in Ohio and Michigan added more successful runs to this winter's list, while The Boaterz n Bikerz "Hull of a Tour" will go on the road this May.

The 3 annual Progressive Akron Boat & Water Sports Show was in the right place at the right time, if measured by the record-breaking crowds that descended on the downtown John S. Knight Center for three days earlier this month. Attendance increased 40 percent--though part of the increase might have been because the big January show in Cleveland was hit by a blizzard that prevented some people from getting there.

"We're delighted with the increase, whatever the reason," says Michelle Burke, president of the Cleveland-based Lake Erie Marine Trades Association that produces the show. "Many visitors told us they were drawn because we increased the features on fishing and water sports that are so popular on the area's inland lakes instead of Lake Erie. Our dealers reported brisk sales, too."

The organizers added a variety of show features. Among them was the Fisherman's Central Fishing Stage that had continuous seminars by local experts. The popular Bass Tub was also added to the show, as were a series of paddleboard and kayak fishing demonstrations presented by Sun Valley.

Meanwhile, 40 percent was also the magic number for the growth of the Novi Boat Show produced by the Michigan Boating Industry Association. It wrapped up a four-day run in Detroit's Suburban Collection Showplace last Sunday. This show follows MBIA's successful Detroit Boat Show held downtown in mid-February, thus giving MBIA members a solid one-two market punch this year.

"With more space available," explained MBIA's executive director, Nicki Polan, "exhibitors responded by making the show 40 percent larger. We also added new features including the 'Harborside Market' which visitors really enjoyed. Best of all, our dealers have reported boat sales were very good, continuing our success."

At 415,000 square feet of exhibit space, the sold-out Novi Boat Show featured boats from 10 to 35 feet this year. Additional promotions included the Paint-A-Paddle Workshop; the Go Dive Now scuba pool; and a special Kids Zone.

Boaterz n Bikerz

Once again, the long-standing dean of marine industry marketing, Wanda Kenton Smith, has announced this year's Boaterz n Bikerz of America "Hull of a Tour." It is set for kick-stands-up on May 5-11.

This will be the fifth Boaters n Bikerz ride, each touring different locations. This year the riders will head into the Great Smoky Mountains on a ride dubbed "The Dragon's Roar." Headquarters will appropriately be at the Iron Horse Motorcycle Lodge & Resort in Robbinsville, NC. From that base, the rider will explore the tri-state region.

While I'm not a biker, I have for years admired reports of this event. It always reflects Wanda Kenton Smith's professional marketing success and especially her personality. She gives meaning to the song, "Girls just wanna have Fun!"

Boaterz 'n Bikerz of America has enjoyed a variety of adventures. The first Hull of a Tour was a series that featured "The Freedom Ride" from Florida to Washington, D.C. and concluded in the million-bike Memorial Day weekend event that was dubbed Rolling Thunder.

Another tour, the "Pacific Coast Rush," covered a scenic run via the Pacific Coast Highway from Seattle to San Francisco, including the Big Sur. Still another, and the most recent, was a four-state expedition throughout New England appropriately called "The Lobster Roll."

Maine industry companies have revved up their promotional engines to join and support the tour. Evinrude/BRP has been the title sponsor for several years. Additional sponsors include *Soundings Trade Only*, Sea Tow and Kenton Smith Marketing. This year's boat sponsor is Malibu Boats, which will be hosting a celebration lunch on the water with an afternoon of boat rides.

Want to join "The Dragon's Roar"? First, participation is limited to members of the boating industry and their sponsored guests. Group motorcycle riding experience is also recommended. Other than a rider's own expenses and provisions, however, there are no tour fees to participate, but advance registration is required.

For more information about this year's Hull of a Tour, you can contact [Wanda Kenton Smith](#).

