



Rebekah Savage photo/FOR THE FULTON SUN

BIKERS AGAINST CHILD ABUSE (B.A.C.A.) members.

Bikers tell WWU students how they protect children

By DANI MORITZ
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Imagine being alone in a dark alley while a stereotypical biker walks toward you—a large man covered in tattoos, wearing dark clothes with a vest and chains.

Now imagine that same person holding your hand as you walk into a courtroom to face the person who abused you. Relieved and protected is probably how you would feel. That's exactly how children who are helped by BIKERS AGAINST CHILD ABUSE (B.A.C.A.) feel. Protected. Safe. Empowered.

Five members of B.A.C.A. visited William Woods University on Thursday to share their story. Their program was sponsored by the WWU social work department in conjunction with Child Abuse Awareness Month.

Members who presented included Goldielocks, Bear, Rabbi, Diesel and Deacon. These names are road names that are

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used to conceal their identities from perpetrators. Road names are also given to children.

A man now known as Chief founded B.A.C.A. in 1995. Chief wanted to help keep abused children safe and empower them to tell their stories. He knew that children who feel safe are more likely to provide the necessary evidence to prosecute child abusers.

Through founding B.A.C.A., Chief did that and so much more.

B.A.C.A. helps abused children internationally by providing a support group. B.A.C.A. members visit these children's homes and become part of their family. Children are inducted into the group by a short ceremony in which the victims receive their own vest and kid's patch which they get to choose, along with their own road name.

Through B.A.C.A.'s intervention, which ranges from level one to four, supported children often develop self-confidence, diminish regressive behavior, improve communication skills, decrease negative behaviors and feelings of guilt and are empowered to testify in court.

While B.A.C.A. does not provide a crutch for children that could potentially handi-

cap them, they do provide a permanent support group for children who desperately need it.

"One of the biggest issues with children who have been abused is adults have let them down," said Rabbi. "Adults have lied to them. Adults have misled them. Once we gain their trust, it is imperative that we never ever break that trust."

Because B.A.C.A. works specifically with abused children, it is no small feat to join its ranks.

To join, everyone is required to go through strict background checks and participate in a one-year minimum trial period. During this period, they must attend at least 80 percent of B.A.C.A. rides and events and be voted in unanimously by the governing board of directors. Members all receive yearly training as well.

As members, they are completely committed to child victims and each other.

"You never know what closeness is until you're on a level two," said Deacon. "When we get together on a level two, that's when our brotherhood is really strong. We're there for one reason and one reason alone, and that is to keep that child safe."

Level two refers to when members create a presence at the child's home to deter

further abuse and protect them.

Bear agrees that the commitment is strong. "There's no doubt in my mind that my brothers and sisters ... would stand up and take a bullet for me, and every one of them knows that I would do the same," he said. "That's brotherhood."

That's part of the reason being bikers — who are known for strong sense of community — is vital to the organization.

As Diesel stated, "We're one B.A.C.A. We work together in everything we do."

Senior Devin Bain, president of the Social Work Club, was pleased with the event.

"I'm really blown away," she said. "They do a fabulous job, and I want to be a part of it now."

She hopes that those who attended will take from it as much as she did.

So next time you see a biker walking towards you, think twice before judging.

For more information about B.A.C.A., visit their website at bacaworld.org. If you or your child needs non-emergency assistance, call the B.A.C.A. help line at (800) 467-4183. For information, call (866) 71-ABUSE

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(Editor's note: Story by Dani Moritz and photos by Rebekah Savage, both WWU students.)