

OFFICIAL MEDIA RELEASE

Release Contact: Lucy Nicandri, Executive Director
(941) 706-3795 / lucy.nicandri@suncoastcc.org

RELEASE DATE: August 24, 2017

FESTIVAL ORGANIZERS ANNOUNCE CHANGES TO THUNDER BY THE BAY IN CELEBRATION OF ITS 20TH ANNIVERSARY

Suncoast Charities for Children has finalized a new date and location for this year's 20th Annual Thunder By The Bay Motorcycle Festival. The four-day Festival will take place February 15-18, 2018 to include a new "Bikes On Main" Block Party in Downtown Sarasota on Friday evening, February 16. The Festival portion of the event will take place at the Sarasota County Fairgrounds and admission will remain free to the public.

Suncoast Charities for Children Board Member and local attorney, Greg Linehan, along with long-time Festival Sponsor and owner of Rossiter's & Mantee River Harley-Davidson, Rick Rossiter, will serve as Honorary Co-Chairs. A full event schedule, featuring some exciting changes in celebration of the Festival's 20th Anniversary, are underway and will be announced soon.

Festival organizers indicated that what began as a charity motorcycle ride, held immediately in early January right after the holidays, worked great for many years. However, the growing uncertainty surrounding weather in early January, coupled with busy schedules and financial expenditures that typically occur during December, has presented a challenge over the past few years to its vendors, sponsors, and attendees. Being a key fundraising event for Suncoast Charities for Children, this ultimately effects the bottom line back to the charity. "The Sarasota County Fairgrounds offers plenty of room for both indoor and outdoor activities and parking, RV and dry camping, and is centrally located to area hotels and attractions. They have been a wonderful community partner hosting our Festival in the past, and we look forward to working with them in celebration of our 20th Anniversary," says Festival Director Lucy Nicandri.

"I am pleased that we could reach an agreement with Suncoast Charities for Children in support of this great event and the good work they do here in the community. The Fairgrounds has undergone recent renovations. Hosting events the size of Thunder By The Bay further emphasizes our capability to hold large events in a comfortable indoor and outdoor setting. Hopefully, this year's new location will afford this event a permanent home," indicated Sarasota Agricultural Fairgrounds President, Rory Martin.

Thunder By The Bay attracts a broad demographic of attendees and participants, whether they are into motorcycling or not. Both Vice Mayor Liz Alpert and City Commissioner Hagen Brody publicly commented about bringing Thunder By The Bay back to Sarasota during a July 10th City Commission Meeting.

"It is an event where friends and families can come out and enjoy each other's company, while stimulating our local economy. I plan to work closely with Festival organizers to ensure its compatibility and future success in its return home to the City of Sarasota." said City Commissioner Hagen Brody.

"I plan to work closely with Festival organizers to reach out to the younger population living here in the City to become involved. It was disappointing to see the Festival leave for a year, knowing that many downtown businesses and residents enjoy this event," said Vice Mayor Liz Alpert.

Thunder By The Bay was last held in the City of Sarasota in 2016 generating an estimated impact of \$8.8 Million and 8,400 room nights. In 2017 The Premier Sports Campus at Lakewood Ranch hosted the Festival. Since then, SMR has offered to sell the Premier Sports Campus to Manatee County Government. "Suncoast Charities for Children is extremely grateful to SMR who graciously hosted the Festival with only four months to plan last year. They were awesome hosts, however, the opportunity to use both an inside and outside venue along with onsite camping played a major factor on our final decision for this year", indicated Nicandri. For sponsorship, volunteer opportunities, or general information about 2018 Festival be sure to visit: thunderbythebay.org