



PROVINCIAL GRAND LODGE OF HAMPSHIRE AND ISLE OF WIGHT

SCRATCH RECEIVES DONATION OF PRESENTS AND MONEY FROM HAMPSHIRE AND ISLE OF WIGHT MASONS



Hundreds of children living in the Southampton area will receive Christmas presents thanks to the generosity of Hampshire and Isle of Wight Freemasons who throughout November and the beginning of December donated new toys and funds in support of the SCRATCH Charity.

Driven by the Southern Chapter of the Widow's Sons Masonic Biker Association with support from the Area Charity Stewards and members of the recently consecrated Motorcyclists Lodge 9939 the aim was to collect brand-new toys within every Masonic Centre to be collected and delivered to the SCRATCH premises in Southampton in time for them to be sorted and delivered to families in need in time for Christmas Day.

President of the Southern Chapter WSMBA Mike Field said, "With the Chapter less than six months old, as President, I am proud that we have pulled together with the Hampshire and Isle of Wight Motorcyclists Lodge and my fellow Area Charity Stewards, to drive this initiative across the whole Province, and deliver the 1000 toys and £3,000 to SCRATCH in 2017. This is a significant improvement on last year and something to further improve on next year".

Although SCRATCH has been developing this initiative for a number of years, the Widow's Sons (South East Chapter) first became involved in 2016 when toys were collected in South Central and North Central Areas, donating about 400 toys and a

cheque for £1300. This year's appeal has more than doubled the success of last year and it is hoped that it will grow further next year.

Mike Smith, the SCRATCH Senior Manager (Operations) said, "SCRATCH is extremely grateful to the Widows Son's and Freemasons across Hampshire and Isle of Wight for their incredibly generous donation of toys and funding which we will use to ensure that many of the poorest families in Southampton will receive gifts for their children and so experience some Christmas joy which would not have been possible if it wasn't for this act of kindness. Thank you very much".

In a typical year, SCRATCH collects and distributes around 15,000 toys and gifts to upwards of 2,000 children and young people who are referred through a variety of organisations, including social services, NHS, schools, housing associations and caseworkers. The main drive for donations is pre-Christmas, but in fact SCRATCH collects toys and gifts throughout the year in support of the Christmas initiative. With the help of their own staff, very many volunteers and Southampton City Neighbourhood Wardens, the gifts are sorted and then delivered in a two-day period in the week before Christmas.



l-r: Mike Wilks, Mike Smith and Mike Field

27 motorcyclists, mainly members of the Southern Chapter and of the Motorcyclists Lodge but including family and friends escorted two van loads of gifts from Kings Court in Chandler's Ford to the SCRATCH premises in Southampton. The Provincial Grand Master, Mike Wilks, made a formal presentation to Mike Smith and the none too warm

motorcyclists were rewarded with hot coffee and mince pies.



SCRATCH (Southampton City Region Action To Combat Hardship) was formed in 1999 to relieve the effects of poverty in the area. It runs a number of projects which address three main forms of poverty, lack of furniture, fuel and food. The flagship 'Dorcas' project delivers furniture packages for people moving into independent living or into the area without the means to purchase furniture. The aim is to ensure that no-one in genuine need of furniture should go without and packages can be delivered without delay in crisis situations.

Further information can be found on the website at www.scratchcharity.co.uk

The Southern Chapter of the Widow's Sons Masonic Bikers Association was formed at the end of July 2017 by members of the South East Chapter and are drawn from Hampshire, Isle of Wight, Berkshire, Buckinghamshire and Oxfordshire. Each Chapter is tasked with at least one major fundraising event each year, the Southern Chapter aims to achieve at least two.



The Chapter also has a social riders group called Cornerstones which is made up of wives, partners, friends and family of members. New Masons can join Cornerstones and transfer their membership to Widow's Sons on becoming Master Masons.

Anyone interested in joining the Southern Chapter can make contact via the website at www.wsmba-southern.co.uk/contact and anyone interested in joining a Chapter elsewhere can visit www.widowssons.org.uk/contact

