

Bay Area News

Ridge and Debbie Jenson of Hitchcock, left, visit with Igor Slavoski of Houston, Kellie Mahon and Kyle Free, both of Galveston, at the first annual Krewe du Vroom Ball at the Crazy Oaks Bar & Grill in Galveston.

KIM CHRISTENSEN: FOR THE CHRONICLE



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MARDI GRAS

New parade set to roar down Galveston streets

Krewe du Vroom a first for celebration on the island

By **ROBERT STANTON**

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A group of loyal motorcycle enthusiasts have launched Krewe du Vroom, the first all-motorcycle krewe in the history of Galveston's Mardi Gras.

About 50 cyclists from throughout Texas, Oklahoma and Colorado are expected to take part in the krewe's "All Motorcycle Parade" on Feb. 16. Galveston's Mardi Gras kicks off Friday and runs through Feb. 20.

"This is fantastic," said Ginger Vitela, president of the newly formed Krewe du Vroom. "Galveston loves firsts."

The krewe is the brainchild of Mike Hightower, chairman of the Galveston Parks Board of Trustees' Mardi Gras Committee.

"Mike put the word out that he wanted to form this group, so a few friends got together who ride motorcycles and decided this would be a great way to form a friendship, share comaraderie and to have fun," said Vitela, who lives in League City.

The krewe's membership quickly grew.

"We bounced it off a few bikers who started putting the word out," Hightower said. "More and more people joined in."

The krewe's founding board is composed of Vitela, president; Lodie Massey of Galveston, vice president; Ann Hightower of Galveston, secretary; Kellie McMahon of Galveston, corresponding secretary; Jim Stanford of Richmond, safety coordinator; and Dow Solari of Galveston, parade chairman.

Big supporters of the krewe include Diane Percetti, chairwoman of the Galveston Parks Board of Trustees, and Mayor Lyda Ann Thomas, who will serve as grand marshal of the all-motorcycle parade.

Coming up with a name for the new krewe was no problem at all, Vitela said.

"Mike (Hightower) said, 'Harleys are loud. What do you think when you hear them?' We all agreed ... 'Vroom' was an appropriate name," Vitela said.

Instead of riding on a traditional float, members of Krewe du Vroom will each ride on their own mini-float — their motorcycles.

"The goal is to promote motorcycle safety for all motorcycle enthusiasts, and to get out and ride with the wind in your face," Mike Hightower said.

robert.stanton@chron.com