

# Kalamazoo Choppers



LINSEY WUEPPER / HOMETOWN GAZETTE

Andy Boersma, of Kalamazoo Choppers, works on a grip on his motorcycle that will be the cover story of V-Twin Motorcycles magazine in April.

# Hog wild

## Local motorcycle builder revved up by national magazine coverage

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Andy Boersma is shocked. He was told that he would have a three- or four-page story with a couple of pictures in the April issue of V-Twin Motorcycles magazine. What he got was six pages, 12 pictures and a fold-out calendar with a picture of him on his custom bike. Oh, yeah, and his bike is pictured on the cover. "I'm really shocked," Boersma said. "We're really excited for the exposure for the

business. Hopefully it will spark more interest." Boersma, of Portage, is the owner of Kalamazoo Choppers, at 6740 Lovers Lane in Portage. Working alongside Boersma is Mike Hillman, a Harley-certified master of service technology. Boersma got interested in motorcycles at a young age. He went to a motorcycle-mechanics institute as a young man and graduated from Indiana University with a major in sociology. The bike featured in the magazine is a chromium-silver 2004 Kalamazoo Chopper, with the chroming done by Paw Paw Plat-



A shiny detail of chrome pipes and other parts make Andy Boersma's Kalamazoo Choppers motorcycle really stand out.

ing. It has a 2004 RevTech engine and a hidden-shock gooseneck frame. According to Boersma, the bike was inspired by the city it was built in. "I just listened to what everyone was saying and what everyone wanted," Boersma said. "This bike was inspired by the Kalamazoo culture. I put (the culture) into a bike, and it got worldwide recognition. People are like, 'Whoa, there really is a Kalamazoo.'" Besides magazine spreads,

Boersma also has awards under his belt. He earned a first-place and two second-place awards for his bikes at the Super Cycle show in Chicago last year. The first-place win came with his 1968 Generator Shovel Head hardtail. Hardtail bikes are "rigid," with no rear suspension. Despite the growing fame, Boersma has been having the nagging problems he faced when he opened the shop.

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Owner of Kalamazoo Choppers, whose custom bike is featured in V-Twin Motorcycles magazine

"We're recognized nationally and around the world, but people are still hesitant to buy my bikes," Boersma said. "I've been invited to do so many big things in the industry — be on TV and big bike shows — but I can't afford to build another bike until I sell these." Boersma is hoping that having

one of his bikes featured on the cover of the magazine will help him make sales. "I hope it will make someone want to buy it more," Boersma said. "Lots of people want it but can't afford it. They say, 'If I win the lottery, I'm buying that bike.'" When asked if he has trouble letting go of his masterpieces,

Boersma said it was quite the opposite. "These bikes are made to be sold and ridden," he said. "And right now they're just sitting here and waiting for an owner." But that doesn't mean Boersma isn't enjoying his time in the spotlight. Overall, he said the latest exposure helps spread the

chopper culture through southwestern Michigan. "We're excited," Boersma said. "I really hope it sparks more interest for what we're doing, because it's really cool." For more information on Boersma and his business, visit the Web site [www.kalamazoo-choppers.com](http://www.kalamazoo-choppers.com).