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Tour de Melon attracts hundreds of riders



Some of the many bicyclists are seen leaving the park early Saturday morning.

Story, Photos and Video

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CHIEFLAND – The Sixth Annual Tour de Melon Bicycle Ride attracted the most participants in its history so far, Suwannee Valley Rotary Club President Justin Hardy

President Hardy is one of the 28 members of the Suwannee Valley Rotary Club. He said all 28 members worked on this project, and Saturday morning there were friends and relatives of those Rotarians who volunteered to make it a success as well.

In this video, there is a singing of the *Star-Spangled Banner* and then the bicyclists start their rides. They take off in two groups. First there are the 100-mile riders. Then the riders who are taking the shorter routes take off.

This year there were 241 riders who registered, Hardy said. There were 192 riders last year. Within minutes after all of the riders launched Saturday morning, three more people showed up at the starting point and said they would like to ride.

Rotarian Andrea Wasson was the key person directing activities this year for the bike ride.

Wasson has chaired the committee leading the event for at least three years so far. She was too busy to speak to the media Saturday morning. Hence the club president accepted that duty, when she asked him to do so.

There was a light fog that rolled in between 6:30 and 7:30 a.m. to Charles Strickland Recreation Park in Chiefland. Visibility was unhampered, though, and the 7:30 a.m. start of the event went without any flaw.

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One skunk did suffer a fatal injury either late Friday night or early Saturday morning. The skunk's lifeless body was within a quarter mile north of the starting point at Charles Strickland Recreational Park on Old Fannin Road.



Suwannee Valley Rotary President Justin Hardy holds up a shirt that was given to riders in this year's race. There are names of sponsors on it.

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These maps show the 100-mile, 58-mile, 50-mile, 43 -mile and 22-mile routes.



This is the equipment used to make water misters for various rest stations. The thin mist of water cools riders. If the background seems dark, that is because it is dark. This picture was taken as the Rotarians prepared for the arrival of the bicycle riders.

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John Stricklan, 51, of Gainesville is ready for the 100-mile ride. He mentioned that while his last name is similar to the last name of the person honored by naming of the park, there is no “d” at then of his name.

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Jose Cabrera, 44, and Edwin Daleccio, 40, both of Clermont are riders who took the 100-mile route.



Alice Parrish, 26, of Gainesville was born in Great Britain; hence her Great Britain shirt for bike riding. She is a 100-mile rider.

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It is always fun to capture a paradox on digital film. A paradox is a seemingly absurd or self-contradictory statement or proposition that when investigated or explained may prove to be well-founded or true. In this instance, there is a pair of docs. Dr. Bill Martin (left) is an orthodontist and Dr. Bob Mount is a dentist. If Dr. Bennett Patterson and Dr. Keith Richeson, two chiropractors who also are active in community events, were seen in the same frame as doctors Martin and Mount, then the pair of docs would be a four-some of docs, which may be good for some card games or golf, however it would do away with the paradox. The two sets of pairs of docs, might be considered to be paradoxes, but this again takes something away from the fun of a pair of docs as a paradox.



This is the Start-Finish line before Rotarian Doug King brought washers and screws to put through holes and attach to the wooden frame. Rotarians and doctors Bill Martin and Bob Mount helped King complete the final touches on the alpha-omega point of this bicycle ride. The thin black line - a little bit to the right on the top of the sign - is a zip-tie. The zip-ties were all replaced with the more stable method of holding the banner.

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A Levy County Sheriff's deputy confers with Rotarians before the start of the ride. Riders traveled through Levy, Dixie and Gilchrist counties.

Many of the riders took the 100-mile route, although there were shorter stretches.

President Hardy said the club plans to give most of the proceeds to two groups this year – the Backpack For Kids program, which helps feed Levy County students who are in homes where even having enough food to eat is an issue; and the Levy Association for Retarded Citizens, which is a day program to help differently-abled individuals improve their lives as much as possible.

Bicyclists from many different places came to ride in this event again this year.

Some took the longest route, which is a 100-mile tour through the countryside of the Tri-County Area of Levy, Dixie and Gilchrist counties.

Bike SAG (Support And Gear) Inc. (<http://www.bikesag.com/>) provided support for the bicyclists. Dave Lancaster is the man who was in the van with the plan to assist riders.

Members of the Rotary Club International strive to “put service above self.”

This project gave Rotarians, and their friends and family members to apply the principle in the performance of the activity, and then they will be able to provide funds to worthy projects.