

The Chronicle

Annual Event Rolls Through the Twin Cities Trek: 9,500 Bicyclists Take Part in 29th Annual Ride From Seattle to Portland

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By Eric Schwartz

The Chronicle

The Centralia College campus morphed into a tent city Saturday as more than 9,500 people pedaled through the Twin Cities as part of the 29th Group Health Seattle to Portland Bicycle Classic.

Officially marked as the halfway point of the 200-mile route, the college's central plaza was filled with weary bicyclists in search of rest and sustenance early Saturday afternoon.

The annual event began at the University of Washington Saturday, and ended

with riders crossing the finish line at the Lloyd Center in Portland. Two thirds of the riders make the trip in two days, but some single-day riders had already pushed through to Winlock by mid-morning Saturday.

By Saturday afternoon, riders from all across the country found themselves in small towns like Centralia, where many sought out places to sleep and eat before pressing on.

“At this point, I’m thinking I can’t believe I’m only halfway,” said 23-year-old Jake Carter, seated underneath a tree eating a plate full of spaghetti on the Centralia College campus. “I’ll eat, maybe take a quick nap, then bust my butt down to Portland.”

Carter planned to find a place to stay on the route. Churches, businesses and homes throughout the Interstate 5 corridor open their doors to the bicyclists each year. Matt Cochrane, 29,



Mike Salsbury, The Chronicle

Seattle to Portland riders aim towards a water mister outside the home of Centralia resident Rocky Poyns as they arrive at the halfway point of their cycling marathon on Saturday near Centralia College. Poyns is a past participant of the event and started setting up the mister three years ago to help riders cool off.

Centralia, said he posted an advertisement on the classified Web site craigslist.org offering a room in his Yew Street home for \$50 a night.

“I got about 10 calls about it,” Cochrane said. “It’s a nice way to make a few bucks every year. The (bicyclists) are usually very clean and courteous. Haven’t had any problems.”

Still, other participants provided their own housing. Alaina Stoyer, Seattle, sat in a chair behind

an RV just off of the Mellen Street Exit in Centralia and waited for her boyfriend to arrive. She said he would sleep for about an hour when he made it to Centralia, and then he would move on.

“At that point I’ll head down to the Kelso area and see if he is interested in taking a break now. I’m the unofficial pit crew, you could say,” Stoyer said.

Riders in the event represented 44 states and eight countries, including Nepal, Ireland, Australia and Switzerland, according to organizers. The oldest registered rider was 86 years old, and the youngest was 2 years old.

The STP event is Cascade Bicycle Club’s largest fundraiser and is also the largest multi-day cycling event in the Northwest, according to organizers.



Mike Salsbury, The Chronicle

Centralia College athletic department employee Elaine Waterman of Tenino welcomes Seattle to Portland riders as they arrive at the college Saturday afternoon to complete the first half of their weekend bicycle marathon.



Mike Salsbury, The Chronicle

Seattle to Portland riders arrive in pastoral Lewis County and leave behind a bumpy road surface on state Route 507, where the end of a road project in Thurston County caused some celebration among the riders on Saturday.



Mike Salsbury, The Chronicle

Jim Stack of Puyallup takes Rumor along for her first Seattle to Portland ride on Saturday. Stack said the dog is very used to riding and has logged about 18,000 miles alongside her owner.

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