

SPORTS

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'Ride of Silence' returns May 19

By Nick Prevenas, www.gvnews.com

Each year, the tightly knit Green Valley cycling community pays tribute to those who have been killed or injured on the roadways without saying a word.

The Santa Cruz Valley Area 2010 Ride of Silence will be held on May 19 — the area's fourth such event.

The ride will start at 6 p.m., but participants are invited to arrive at the East Social Center a half-hour earlier and enjoy some light refreshments provided by Green Valley Bike & Hike.

The nation's first Ride of Silence took place in 2003 when Chris Phelan of Dallas organized the event after endurance cyclist Larry Schwartz was hit by the mirror of a passing bus on an empty road and was killed. With only 10 days notice, the event attracted 1,000 riders.

Green Valley joined the ride four years later. The local cycling community was deeply saddened by the death of Fred Hettig on March 22, 2006. As a result, Hettig's close friends and fellow cycling enthusiasts have used this event to raise awareness for cycling safety, while paying tribute to one of the area's most beloved figures.

This year's seven-mile ride will follow a slightly different path. From the East Center, the riders will head west on Esperanza, then north on Desert Bell past the scene of a fatal cyclist crash in September. The ride continues north on La Canada, east on Duval Mine Road, and then south on Abrego back to East Center.

Riders will observe the world-wide guidelines for the Ride of Silence and ride at a slow and comfortable pace while conducting the ride in total silence. Local bicyclists will lead the way, with the Pima County Sheriff's Department, the Sheriff's Auxiliary Volunteers, and the Green Valley Fire District providing support.

Helmets are required for riders. The Santa Cruz Valley Area Ride of Silence is endorsed by the Santa Cruz Valley Bicycle Advocate Committee and Green Valley Bike & Hike.

The Ride of Silence requires that all riders wear helmets, with the option of wearing black or red arm bands. Riders are asked to pedal no faster than 12 miles per hour in single file.

In 2009, 75 riders took part in the Green Valley Ride of Silence. A total of 778 cyclists participated in six different cities (including 275 in Tucson) throughout Arizona last year.

For more information on the international Ride of Silence event go to www.rideofsilence.org, or visit the Santa Cruz Valley Bicycle Advocate Committee at www.scvbac.org.



FILE PHOTO Green Valley cyclists take part in the Ride of Silence in this May 20, 2009 file photo. The 2010 Ride of Silence is scheduled for May 19 at 6 p.m.