

Ride of Silence returns — with healing

By **Mary Glen Hatcher**
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Cyclists from around Southern Arizona are invited to participate in the 18th local observance of Green Valley's Ride of Silence on Wednesday, May 17.

Held on the third Wednesday in May, which is also National Bike Month, the ride aims to raise the awareness of motorists, police and city officials that cyclists have a legal right to the public roadways, and is also a chance to honor the lives of cyclists who have been killed or injured.

In 2003, Chris Phelan organized the first Ride of Silence in Dallas after his friend and endurance cyclist Larry Schwartz died after he was hit by the mirror of a passing school bus.

A few years later, the Santa Cruz Bicycle Advocate Committee, under the leadership of Chuck Hill, brought the Ride of Silence to the Green Valley area for the first time to honor local cyclist Fred Hettig, who lost his life while cycling on Old Nogales Highway.

Since then, the event has grown to more than 220 locations worldwide, across 12 countries and four continents.

The free ride invites cyclists of all ages to ride no faster than 12 mph, wear helmets and follow the rules of the road while remaining silent.

Chuck Hill, longtime

If you go

Ride begins at 6 p.m. on Wednesday, May 17. Lite refreshments will be available at 5:30 p.m. **The ride route** will start and end at GVR East Center (7 S. Abrego Drive). Helmets are required for riders.

Riders will follow a 7-mile loop from the GVR East Center, down Esperanza Boulevard to La Canada Drive, Duval Mine Road and Nogales Highway.

Route support and cyclist escort assistance will be provided by the Pima County Sheriff's Department, the Green Valley Sheriff's Auxiliary Volunteers and the Green Valley Fire District.

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

To view a video of the 2022 Ride of Silence in Green Valley, visit bit.ly/GVRide2022.

If you want to learn more about bicycle laws in your own state, visit 3feetplease.org.

organizer of Green Valley's ride, has plans to sign off on his leadership role this year, but said paying tribute to cyclists who have lost their lives each year will continue to play an important part in his life.

"One of the ride's goals is to illustrate to others that, hey, bicycles are here and we need and want to share the road with vehicles. I believe in that mission, and that's why I have continued to organize it for so many years," Hill said.

"Us cyclists, we aren't going away, and in fact, we've probably grown in numbers as a result of the pandemic. So, this is just really an important way of increasing our visibility, and a great opportunity to recognize and remember those cyclists who have

been killed or injured on roadways, because even in our community, we've had some tragedies of our own," he said.

'A HEALING PROCESS'

For Gilbert resident David Waechter, who frequents Green Valley's Ride of Silence, this year's ride will hold a special meaning.

Wednesday's event marks nine years to the day that a close friend and cycling partner, Lynn Hartline, died during a fundraising ride near Sedona in 2014.

According to news reports, Hartline, Waechter and his 16-year-old daughter were struck by a vehicle when a van driver attempted to pass the cyclists on a two-lane road



Tom and Monica Parker photo taken on Esperanza Boulevard for Green Valley's Ride of Silence on May 18, 2022.

Cyclists head out

and collided with them, throwing all three from their bikes.

Though Waechter and his daughter survived, sustaining permanent injuries, Hartline, 48, passed away hours later at a Flagstaff hospital.

Hartline, a mother to three and former director at a suicide prevention center, was deeply devoted to caring for and helping the children in her life. She was known for handing out over a thousand stuffed animals to kids when they were stressed, "even off the back of our tandem," Waechter said.

Days before her death, she met and held her first granddaughter, and was eager to devote even more

time to her family and friends once she got back from her cycling trip.

"I'm not the same. I mean, I don't think I'll ever be. You don't get to hold your friend's hand while she dies and think you'll ever completely recover," Waechter said.

"I still cycle because I like to, but there are honestly days where I get on my bike and I realize I'm doing it by myself, not with my friend, and some days that's a pretty powerful reminder. I imagine that's the same for anybody who lost someone in an accident."

But just knowing there are "good people out there," and finding many examples of that in

the cycling community, Waechter said, has made it a little easier to get back on the bike on the tougher days.

"What I think a lot of people don't fully appreciate is when they show up to something like the Ride of Silence is that there is at least one person, if not many, who have gone through the same kind of tragedy," he said.

"So, when you're sitting in that parking lot, when you're waiting for the ride to start, and you see a bunch of people just pouring in, you just feel better. There's really a healing process that takes place during these rides."

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RIDE

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3-FEET PLEASE

Frustrated and searching for answers after the tragedy, Waechter channeled a lot of his emotions into researching safe passing laws in the state, which led him to his current work with 3 Feet Please.

“Safe passing” or “3-foot” laws seek to ensure that, when passing bicycles, motor vehicles allow adequate space to avoid side-swiping bicyclists or causing them to overcorrect to avoid a vehicle.

Arizona currently has a safe passing law which defines the safe passing distance as “not less than three feet.”

But these laws aren’t universal, and can vary widely from state-to-state. Even states that do have safe passing laws on the books often lack the enforcement or education necessary to really make them impactful, Waechter says.

With his work at 3 Feet Please, Waechter said he hopes to be a source of education and information that can help local cyclists to learn about the laws in their community, to



David Waechter and Lynn Hartline at a bike ride across Iowa in 2013. Lynn died in a crash in 2014.

make streets safer for both drivers and cyclists, and to help spare families from the pain of losing a loved one too soon.

“From a vehicle perspective, just stopping the distracted driving and simply slowing down, I think, would do so much good for all of us. From a cyclist’s perspective, we need to follow the law and we need to be seen, that’s

what we’re focused on,” Waechter said.

“Beyond that, we need drivers to exercise caution and care when they pass us. Every cyclist out there has people who love and care about them and they deserve the extra few seconds it takes to be passed in a safe manner. Despite what many people believe, the roads legally belong to all of us – not

just vehicles.”

On Wednesday evening, Chuck Hill said he’s hoping everyone will be focused on that, too.

“All we can hope for really is some good weather, a safe ride and for people to show up and notice us, to really see us and respect us.”

Mary Glen Hatcher
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MOAA Green Valley photo
Nogales High School student Christopher Pena, Sahuarita High School student Shayla Blair and Walden Grove High School student Brandon Palmer.

MOAA awards scholarships

By Green Valley News

The Green Valley Chapter of the Military Officers Association of America held its annual scholarship dinner May 9 at the Grill on the Green.

MOAA awarded three scholarships for \$2,500 to local JROTC students for outstanding leadership, community involvement and contributions to their units.

Two Naval JROTC

cadets received scholarships: Sahuarita High School student Shayla Blair and Brandon Palmer from Walden Grove High School.

Cadet Christopher Pena from the Nogales High School Air Force JROTC program also received a scholarship.

For more information on how to contribute to the local MOAA chapter’s scholarship program, visit greenvalleymoaa.org.

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