

Morris Freewheelers host cycling for EMS squads, June 10



A Share the Road, Share the Responsibility sign advocates the importance of bikers and drivers being aware of one another. MAFFnj.org

By Ally Tobler - June 7, 2017

The **Morris Area Freewheelers** have been lucky. They have needed only one ambulance for every 70,000 miles biked by their cyclists.

Yet accidents do happen — they've had 13 of them over the last 35 years— and they take comfort knowing that volunteer EMS squads are ready to respond quickly when needed.

To say thanks, the Freewheelers Foundation is hosting its 9th annual **Revolutionary Ramble**, a ride to benefit area rescue crews, on Saturday, June 10, 2017.

"It feels so good to be able to give back to the squads that have helped riders when they needed it most," said **Kathleen Caccavale**, a Freewheelers board member.

Saturday's ride includes cyclists from inside and outside of the club, and support from local bike shops, EMS squads and 150 volunteers.

About 1,000 riders of all levels are anticipated, for tours ranging from 10- to 100 miles, starting from Drew University in Madison.

Points of interest include **Jockey Hollow**, **Seaton Hackney Stables**, and **Saint Hubert's Animal Welfare Center**.

Fourteen states have been represented over the years, and cyclists even have come from the U.K. and Australia, according to **Jay Marowitz**, chair of the Freewheelers Foundation.

Registration costs from \$5 to \$75, depending on cyclists' age.

The idea of donating proceeds to EMTs dates to 2008, from Ramble volunteer **Dan Byrd**. Last year, 25 ambulance squads received \$1,250 apiece from the Freewheelers.

'THEY CAME RIGHT AWAY'

When tragedy struck the Freewheelers a few years ago, paramedics responded swiftly.

"The Mendham EMS teams came right away," Marowitz said, referring to an accident in which a rider was fatally injured when he swerved and struck his head on the ground.

New Jersey has had four cyclist deaths this year; in 2016, there were three.

According to the Revolutionary Ramble website, most accidents actually are bike-on-bike, not bike-on-car.



Morris Minute Men at MAFF's 8th annual Revolutionary Ramble. Photo by Ray Isola

"The number of bicycle crashes that involve motorized vehicles correlates directly with ridership; when ridership goes up, the number of crashes goes up. Ridership drops, crashes drop," said **Cyndi Steiner**, executive director of the **New Jersey Bike & Walk Coalition**.

"This is because we as a state have done virtually nothing to make our roads safer for bike riders; therefore, the percentage of bike/car crashes remains pretty much steady," Steiner said.



Cyclists at MAFF's 8th annual Revolutionary Ramble. Photo by Ray Isola

Although Caccavale never has needed the assistance of a rescue squad, she has witnessed volunteer EMS teams help other cyclists.

"I was on a ride once where someone was injured and a number of us stayed with him until the rescue squad came," she said.

"The rescue squad was very good about taking care of him. They even used a support board for him because they were worried about his neck."

'IT'S NOT JUST ABOUT THE EXERCISE'

This Ramble benefits all-volunteer EMS squads, because "that's where we can make the biggest impact," Caccavale said.

"We recognized the fact that these volunteer squads were there when we needed them, and yet they were struggling financially," she said.

Volunteer EMS squads will be stationed along the Ramble routes, and not just for safety.

"It's a big social thing," said Marowitz. "It's not just about the exercise."

Marowitz dreamed up the Ramble after enjoying a multi-day ride on the West Coast. He brought the idea to **Marty Epstein**, owner of **Marty's Reliable Cycle**.

"And Marty said, 'You know, Jay, I want to do something big with you guys.' I looked at him and said, 'Good timing.'"

Other biking initiatives of the Freewheelers include **Title 39: A Bike's Eye View**, a new program that will "get police out of their squad cars and onto bikes, so they can experience the road from a cyclist's point of view," said Caccavale.

The Madison police will host a class on June 19, 2017, with additional support from the New Jersey Bike & Walk Coalition.

The Freewheelers also helped get bike racks installed in Mendham and Morris Township, and now they seek a grant for Madison.

Jim Hunt, vice chair of the Freewheelers Foundation, created another program, **Share the Road, Share the Responsibility**, to educate cyclists and drivers on how to be alert to one another.

Money from the Ramble will be presented to EMS squads at a dinner this fall.



A Share the Road, Share the Responsibility sign advocates the importance of drivers and cyclists being aware of one another on the road.

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Ally Tobler