

## Gran Fondo bike tour earns certification from Council for Responsible Sport

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**MORRISTOWN** – Gran Fondo NJ, an annual bike marathon that raises funds for local organizations, has become the first cycling event to be recognized by **the Council for Responsible Sport** for its efforts to promote social and environmental responsibility.

Race organizers **Marty Epstein and Bill Ruddick were awarded a gold level certification last Tuesday** by the Oregon-based non-profit organization.

The Council strives to recognize sporting events that "increase social benefits while reducing its environmental footprint," according to **the organization's website**.

Gran Fondo NJ, held each September, attracts casual cyclists along with well-trained endurance athletes to ride for a good cause – or rather, several good causes, including Sustainable Morristown, Homeless Solutions, Grow It Green Morristown, New Jersey Bike & Walk Coalition and The Seeing Eye.

Since its founding three years ago, the Gran Fondo NJ has raised more than \$600,000 for local charities, Epstein said.

"When we started Gran Fondo NJ in 2011, our primary objective was to put on a world-class Gran Fondo for cyclists in the tri-state area and to try and implement the principles of sustainability in the process," said Epstein, who owns Marty's Reliable Cycles in Morristown. "Little did we know at the time the beneficial impact the event would have on our community."



NJBWC Executive Director Cyndi Steiner, the event's grand marshal, and Marty Epstein, the event's organizer, at the Gran Fondo, where a record number of cyclists participated in the bike marathon.

Interest has steadily climbed in the Gran Fondo NJ, which features four routes riders can choose from, ranging from 18 to 107 miles, all beginning and ending on Speedwell Avenue. Afterward, there is a party with music, food and giveaways.

**More than 2,000 riders participated** in the bike marathon this past September.

The Council's certification director Shelley Villalobos said, "Rarely does the Council see an event jump so fully into the certification process and all the work that goes into it as has Grand Fondo NJ. The charitable donations, the broadened participation of the community by removing barriers and the zero waste effort are all amazing achievements in themselves. This Gold Level Certification is a badge of honor that was well-earned."

Gran Fondo NJ was praised for actions such as using environmentally friendly printing materials and processes, promoting a free "Kids Fondo" race, using goods and services from local businesses and keeping waste water from a bike lube station from reaching ground water.

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