

Cyclists gear up for annual ride to help find missing children

Fairport, N.Y. - Wheels will be spinning May 16 as more than 200 riders mount their bicycles for a 100-mile trek around Monroe County to support the New York branch of the National Center for Missing and Exploited Children. Assemblyman David Koon, D-Perinton, will be among the riders. His daughter, Jennifer Koon, was abducted and murdered in 1993 when she was 18.

The 8th annual event begins and ends at Total Sports Experience, 880 Elmgrove Road, and includes stops at several elementary schools, where chapter representatives will lead mini student rallies of songs and messages to raise awareness of child safety issues.

Joining them will be Clicky, one of three characters used to promote Internet safety for children. The "spokesrobot" will lead the children in songs as they cheer on the cyclists, who ride two by two in bright jerseys in honor of missing and exploited children.

"We'll have Clicky live right there," said Ed Suk, executive director of the New York branch. "We're really excited about it. It's another way to reinforce all of our messages. We have really been focusing very heavily — and rightfully so — on Internet safety."

Suk said before the ride, center representatives will be in participating schools providing safety education so kids will be familiar with Clicky and his counterparts who are featured on the Web site www.netsmartz.org.

Suk said all money raised stays in the Rochester area to support the organization's efforts to recover missing children and provide abduction and sexual exploitation prevention education programs in schools and throughout the community. The New York branch of the national center receives 85 percent of its funding from local donations; 15 percent comes through the national center from the federal Department of Justice.

Fast Facts

ROCHESTER — The New York branch of the National Center for Missing and Exploited Children, headquartered in Rochester, helps in the recovery of missing children and prevents child victimization through prevention education about child abduction, molestation and sexual exploitation.

For more information about New York branch, call (585) 242-0900, or visit www.missingkids.com.

The 8th annual Ride for Missing Children opens at 7:30 a.m. Friday, May 16, at Total Sports Experience, 88 Elmgrove Road. Riders will be led off by bagpipes and the national anthem proceeding to the following:

- 8:41 a.m. — Northwood Elementary School, 433 N. Greece Road, Hilton
- 10:13 a.m. — Munn Elementary School, 2333 Manitou Road, Spencerport
- 11:23 a.m. — Chestnut Ridge Elementary School, 3560 Chili Ave., Churchville
- 12:55 p.m. — Winslow Elementary School, 725 Pinnacle Road, Henrietta
- 2:31 p.m. — School 46 Elementary, 250 New Castle Road, Rochester
- 3:23 p.m. — Silent Ride-By In Memory of Jennifer Koon, a young Fairport woman kidnapped and killed in 1993; White Haven Memorial Park
- 4:16 p.m. — JCC Day Care, 1200 Edgewood Ave., Rochester
- 5:42 p.m. — Riders return to starting point.

Riders will hold a silent remembrance of Jennifer Koon.

"We honor Jennifer's memory by having 200 riders do a silent ride-by tribute at White Haven Memorial where Jennifer is laid to rest," Suk said.

Koon, who is an active board member of the National Center for Missing and Exploited Children, last year dismounted at the cemetery's entrance to personally thank riders. "It was pretty moving," Suk said.

Involved in the ride from the beginning have been members of Faust's USA Karate in Perinton, owned by Kathy Faust, who will lead a team of about 20 riders.

"I think that child safety is our premiere topic and I think it's important to walk your talk," Faust said. "I think, quite frankly, somebody has to step up and take the initiative on educating families on how to keep themselves and their children safe. There's not a day of the week that you don't pick up the paper or see on TV that a child's been abducted. Our martial arts program in general teaches children and families to be safe."

The Faust team of 10 last year raised \$8,000 of the total \$82,000 collected by 186 riders. This year there will be more than 200 riders and the goal is to raise \$90,000.

“The ride itself is a fantastic experience,” Faust said. “It’s a lot of fun and a great opportunity to do something wonderful for our community directly.”

Those who want to support the Faust team may send donations by June 1 to Faust’s USA Karate, 6780 Pittsford-Palmyra Road, Fairport, NY 14450. Donations may are also accepted through the Web site www.rideformissingchildren.org, which includes complete information on the Rochester event and other area rides.

By Denise M. Champagne, staff writer
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