

A Bike Club Helping Others in this Time of Social Distancing

Exercising to Keep the Food Shelves Stocked

Hiawatha Bicycling Club like most recreational sports clubs suspended their ride schedule because of COVID-19. But they saw an opportunity to help others while having Club members ride solo and raise money for the local food shelf.

The background

Hiawatha Bike Club was looking for a solution to encourage Club members to continue their passion for Cycling while riding solo. For a number of years, the Club had maintained a large rainy day fund. Their Board felt it wouldn't get much rainer than this pandemic, and decided to create a virtual drive for the local food shelf, Second Harvest Heartland. Club members were challenged to get out and ride, then report their mileage. For every mile they reported, a half a dollar would be added towards the goal of \$2000.

The program was an instant success. Members commented they were motivated to ride more than usual because of the opportunity to help those whose lives were turned upside down from the impact of social distancing.

Taken together, everyone's solo rides contributed to one big group ride. Members took photos of their rides to share on social media to celebrate each other's accomplishments.

Success and More Success:

In less than 3 weeks, over 50 members rode more than 4000 miles to meet the \$2000 goal!

But there is more. With such an enthusiastic response to the challenge, Club members have continued to ride and now make personal donations based on their mileage on behalf of the Hiawatha Bicycling Club.

The program is a win for everybody. Club members feel good about working as a team to support Second Harvest Heartland's mission of helping feed people in these trying times. And, their own personal physical and mental health is benefited through their love of bicycling.

Switching to Solo Riding:

Next, Hiawatha Bicycling Club did not want to waste a whole summer of shared bicycling experiences, and they wanted to change the way they think about riding in groups. They thought the term "*social*" distancing wasn't the best way to describe what they planned for

summer riding. Who does not love being social, right? Maybe “*physical*” distancing would be a better description. So the challenge was to find a way for members to maintain physical distance from each other but stay socially connected.

The Club created the “Self-Paced Ride” to replace group riding until social distancing guidelines are phased out. These are rides done solo, or with other members of their household. The rider may start the ride anytime within a week after the route is posted on the Club’s online ride calendar. Although the ride leader will not be present at the ride, the ride leader does create a safe and interesting route and the Club member gets mileage credit for completing the self-paced ride. After each solo ride, the rider can post their pictures or comments on the Club’s social media page to create a sense of a shared experience.

While COVID-19 is like a bitter lemon, Hiawatha Bicycling Club has found a way to make lemonade out of it until a new normal emerges.

Read more at our website: <https://www.hiawathabike.org/> or contact our President Lisa Soldat at board@hbcmail.org

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