

THE PRINCETON PACKET

Two Ride of Silence events next week

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The first Ride of Silence took place in Texas in 2003, organized after the best friend of the founder died after being hit by the mirror of a school bus while cycling in Dallas.

That ride drew more than 1,000 cyclists. It has since grown into an international day of remembrance for people who have been hurt or killed in a bike or pedestrian accident.

On Wednesday, May 18, two groups — one in West Windsor and one in Skillman — will depart for an hour-long ride, starting at 7 p.m.

Silvia Ascarelli, vice president of the West Windsor Bike and Pedestrian Alliance, rode in last year's Ride of Silence – the first time it was held in the township – and said she plans to ride again this year.

"We all know people or have heard of people injured or killed as a cyclist or pedestrian," she said.

The 10-mile West Windsor ride will begin from the municipal center on Clarksville Road. It will likely go through the major township roads and pass by the train station, she said.

"Last year, there were about a dozen participants," she said. "This is the first year that the Bike and Pedestrian Alliance has been lending its support. We've been spreading the word to all 400 of our members. We're hoping for a really good turnout."

Ms. Ascarelli added that the speed will be slow and manageable for a novice rider.

"Even the average rider who doesn't see themselves as the intense Lycra-clad biker can do this ride," she said.

Riders will be accompanied by a police escort and a hearse, provided by the Mather Hodge Funeral Home in Princeton.

"The point is to be solemn and attract attention. We want to be visible," she said.

Ms. Ascarelli said West Windsor is on its way towards becoming a bike-friendly town, but could always be doing more.

"Seeing a lot of cyclists on the road, especially women riders, is a good sign that a town is bike-friendly," she said. "We want to promote safe cycling and the rules of the road. People should feel safe to ride."

This is the fourth year the ride has taken place in Skillman, said organizer Heather Haggan.

Because the ride is meant to raise awareness, it is always held at 7 p.m., a time when cyclists might not be on the road, and the riders do not exceed a pace of 12 miles-per-hour. The pace and the police escort help to heighten visibility during the 12-mile ride. They also selected busier roads.

For the Skillman ride, that means cycling on Route 206. The riders, who generally communicate verbally when cycling together, will rely solely on hand gestures.

"It's become this worldwide ride," said Ms. Haggan. "So, no matter where you are in the world, it's the third Wednesday of every May at 7 p.m."

Ride of Silence is an organization that's basically promoting sharing the road, said Ms. Haggan, who co-founded Team La Forza.

The Skillman ride will depart from and return to Van Horne Park. All riders are welcome, and no registration is necessary.

For more information see www.rideofsilence.org.

Also part of National Bike Month, the Bike and Pedestrian Alliance is hosting other events to promote bike safety.

On May 21, the group will hold a class for children to learn how to ride without training wheels. The free learn-to-ride and safety class will take place at the farmers' market off Vaughn Drive from 9 a.m. to noon. The group asks that children bring their own bikes and helmets.

On May 28, the alliance will hold the eighth annual BikeFest in the Community Park on Route 571. Departing at different times of the day, there will be a 40-mile ride, 20-mile ride, 11-mile historical tour ride, a 7-mile trolley line trail ride, a 1.5-mile in-park ride and a bike safety rodeo. Check the Alliance's website for more details about registering for any of the rides at www.Westwindsorbikefest.com.

Correction from the WWBPA:

BikeFest is a run by a small committee and supported by the West Windsor

Division of Recreation and Parks. Local businesses support the event and many volunteers support registration, rest stops, sweeping, and feeding the event participants. Volunteers are always welcome. For more information go to West Windsor BikeFest. The WWBPA will have a table at the event, but the WWBPA is not an organizer of the event.