

## Hot Hundred gathers cyclists for fun, charity

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He backpedaled his road bike into the parking lot after riding 100 miles of hot pavement, the sweat on his skin glistening in the sun. He wiped the beads of sweat trickling down his forehead into his squinted eyes in the 90-degree heat.

"It was perfect as usual," cyclist Peter Schoger said. "It was a little hot, but we enjoyed staying in the sun."

Schoger was one of 664 cyclists to participate in the 12th annual Hot Hundred Bicycle Ride beginning and ending at the University of Alabama Recreation Center Saturday to benefit the Tuscaloosa Mental Health Alliance, an organization that provides mental health support and services to the community.

Pixie Hicks, director of the ride, said she expects the registration fees to equal or exceed the \$20,000 raised at last year's Hot Hundred.

She said the money goes to the organization's grants program, where each member agency can apply for grants up to \$1,000 each.

The organization has more than 50 member agencies that assist individuals with acute treatment needs, pursue education for service in mental health-related fields and provide programs and materials to benefit the mental health community.

"It's very important to a lot of people here," Hicks said. "You hear a lot about mental health these days with mass shootings. Tuscaloosa is doing a great job of bringing people together to solve those kinds of problems."

Hicks said the ride is part of that effort. It began in 2002 when North Harbor Pavilion and the Druid City Bicycle Club joined together to create a fundraiser for the mental health task force, which became the Alliance once it was developed as a nonprofit organization, she said.

Since the first ride, cyclists have had the choice to ride different mileages, up to 103 miles.

Cyclists had five choices Saturday — the 29-mile Crimson Tide Ride route, the 36-mile Up Dry Creek Without a Paddle route, the 52-mile Frog Ridge Croaker route, the 71-mile Crazy Like a Foxfire Metric route or the 103-mile Hellishly Hot Hundred route. The 36-, 52- and 71-mile routes are named after the cutoff roads that send the cyclists back to campus.

For the first few miles, the Tuscaloosa Police Department and the Dirty South Cruisers motorcycle club escorted the cyclists. Area churches, fire stations and volunteer rest stops were posted along the way with refreshments and medical



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Bicyclists ride down Sanders Ferry Road early Saturday morning during the annual Hot Hundred in Tuscaloosa, Ala. July 26, 2014. Over 600 cyclists participated in the bike ride that spans over 100 miles. Proceeds go to the Tuscaloosa Mental Health Alliance. Michelle Lepianka Carter | The Tuscaloosa News

teams.

The ride is the fifth event in the Alabama Backroads Century Series, which consists of 10 different 100-mile rides intended to promote long-distance cycling in Alabama.

Schoger said the backroads brought him closer to nature and his fellow cyclists. He said to be able to help the community at the same time is a bonus.

“This ride is a blessing for the community,” he said.

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