



Phillips/Powderhorn Nokomis Riverside

News

Home

News

Phillips Powderhorn
Nokomis
Riverside

Regular Features

Queen of Cuisine
Organic Gardening
Re-Use-It Guide
Letter from Mexico
Powderhorn Bird Watch
Spirit & Conscience

Music

Southside Soul Volume I

Calendars

Neighborhood
Community
Religious
Classifieds

Archives

Search

About Us

Advertising Info

Submit Articles

Submit Press Release

It's finally spring, get on a bike and ride

BY ANGELA GUSTAFSON

My son Wyatt came up to me two summers ago and said, "Hey Mom, there's a camp out there for just about every sport! Why aren't there any biking camps?" He meant camps that took the typical three-hour chunk of time to go out on long bike rides. I took his question and sent an inquiry out to a number of family friends, suggesting we form our own little group.

He and my other three kids play and love a lot of different sports. Biking/cycling is one of their favorites, but there just aren't a lot of opportunities for distance riding under the age of 12. Interesting, especially with the high number of cycling enthusiasts in this area!

Now, nearly 100 families are on the weekly update e-mail list. Most took part in voting on a club name in spring 2010: Mill City Cyclomaniacs. The average number of riders each week is about 25, with some weeks creeping closer to 50. Members come from all over South and Southwest Minneapolis, with most of the pedaling kids between the ages of 6 and 13.

A different 16-22 mile route is established for each week, with a fun food destination spot in the middle.

You don't think your kid can bike 15, 20 or more miles? You'd be amazed at what most kids can accomplish when they're riding with a pack of friends. They don't whine. They don't fight with siblings. They talk, laugh, earn bragging rights, and get a decent workout to boot!

Hardly a ride goes by where an adult doesn't say, "What a city we live in!" or a kid doesn't say, "This is so cool!" With destinations like the Stone Arch Bridge, Izzy's Ice Cream in St. Paul (via Midtown Greenway), Sea Salt at Minnehaha Falls, the Walker Sculpture Garden/Loring Park, and The Depot coffeehouse in Hopkins, it's no wonder.

Rides usually start around 10 a.m. and finish about 2 p.m. Most depart from Lake Calhoun or Lake Harriet, with stops along the way to pick up riders choosing abridged routes. There's no cost to participate, other than your own wheels and treat money at the destination point. If you want to join or are curious, contact Angela Gustafson at angela@ootbooks.com with questions or to be added to the e-mail group list.



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