

2010 MESA Bike Tour Is Ready To Go

After nearly a year of planning, many meetings, numerous phone calls, and hundreds of emails among too many people to count, across District 6600, the 2010 Bike Tour for MESA is ready to go.

The first event was held on Friday night at the Oliver house in Toledo, a beautifully restored building that once was an inn on the road from points east to Chicago, and now is a multi-floored restaurant, lounge and microbrew, home of famous Buckeye Beer and many tasty lagers and ales. Our host tonight was the local Toledo Rotary Club and they gave us a royal treatment. The local coordinator, with whom we have been working all year, is Gary Murphy who amazingly brought together the many different people and organizations for a successful event.

The night before the official start of the tour has become a tradition for getting the riders together for the first time and to meet the host club and have a team meeting so all are on the same page for the week. The MESA Bike Tour is not your typical cycling event: it is a fundraiser first and an opportunity to experience a unique form of Rotary togetherness and fellowship. The tour brings together members from all over the district to share this experience and to discuss what we are really trying to do. Tonight we heard short talks from District Governor Elect Helyn Bolanis and Past District Governor Chuck Stocking. Both explained just how important the tour is to the MESA project, being the major source of income.

As we proceed throughout the week you will hear about our various experiences and hopefully get to meet some of the significant people who are working to make sure the MESA project continues is path of success. Two individuals, who often prefer to take a backstage to the cyclists wearing the funny clothes, are our support vehicle drivers.

Pictured here are Gary Davis (L) and Carl Norris (R). Gary drives the MESA box truck all week and hauls all the bikes when we need to do a mass transit, plus he carries many supplies and food and water and ice. And all our baggage. Gary is the MESA Operations Director, half-time position that occupies his life at about 50 hours a week probably. Space does not permit an complete list of all Gary does for MESA. He keeps track of the inventories, manages the warehouse, serves as the main truck driver, plans and executes shipments all over the world plus organizes the pick up of equipment from local clubs.

Carl Norris is not a Rotarian but has many Rotary friends. This is his fourth year as a driver, a job he cheerfully volunteers for, because "it's interesting and for a good cause." In a former life Carl must have been a sheep herder or a nurse based on the way he keeps track of all the riders and makes sure everyone is doing okay. He drives 20-passenger bus donated to use by Life Care EMS from Elyria. The bus carries more necessary supplies and hauls riders who need a lift for any reason. Carl is one of those people who can make you feel good even on a day when everything else is going badly.

Tomorrow we start our riding finally. Everyone tonight was very eager to get started. We'll have over 20 riders in the morning leaving from the Toledo Zoo, where we have breakfast. Yes, we are all wondering what fodder they will offer us humans but their reputation runs high, based on local reports. There was talk of a ribbon-cutting ceremony to start us off, then we're off to Oak Harbor and Port Clinton on our first day.

Tune in later for tales from the tour. We'll be reporting nightly as the tour moves through the district.