

## Day Four – Norwalk to Fostoria

We've been saying all week how this year's tour has been different for the riders, and today kept that comparison alive. This was "follow the heart of Ohio day" for the tour as our route followed some of the prettiest scenery in our district. This is not to say other areas are not pretty but the route today was a cyclist's dream route.

We began at Fisher Titus Medical Center in Norwalk, after a night in Rotarians' homes and fellowship with families. Riders talked excitedly about the interesting folks they spent the night with. It was an early 7 a.m. start with food, which gave us some much-needed time to attend to our steeds (bikes) which had not seen much mechanical care or cleaning for a while. Then we were off toward Bellevue via Monroeville. Bellevue was ready and waiting for us at the community recreation center. Dean Miller had some members present to help cheer us on and help with dispersing the beverages and fresh melons. There's something about fresh cantaloupe on a hot day that we all appreciated very much.

From Bellevue it was on to Clyde, where we picked up the Clyde to Fremont segment of the North Coast Inland Trail. The trail was a nice change from the country roads. At the end of the trail we all amassed for a police escort into town. The Fremont Rotary had members and friends waving "WELCOME MESA RIDERS" signs and cheering us on at many corners as we passed through. The reception gave us such an uplifting feeling about how all our efforts were being appreciated. Lunch was at the Birchard Library and we all ate our fill in style. A short presentation included the club's donation with a "big check" printed oversized at 2' X 4' and sizable enough in dollars too.

Our exit from town was guided by Rotarian and local bike shop owner Mike Wagner. The intended route had to be changed due to a bridge closing so we needed a secondary route led by a local. After he left us we were on our own out in the country, passing corns and soybeans, soybeans and corn, and a few fields awaiting the next planting of wheat. For the next 20 miles or so we only saw a handful of cars along the scenic byway that twisted and zig-zagged southwesterly toward Bettsville. Here is where the route became even more scenic as we rode adjacent to the quiet Wolf Creek, then angled on one-lane roads toward Fostoria, our destination for the day.

We arrived in Fostoria a little early, which was good because we were expected to be a part of the MESA Steering Committee. This was being held at the Fostoria Promedica Medical Center. Once through its business meeting, the committee acknowledged the efforts of the riders and how much they meant to the project. Over the last few years, the Bike Tour has become more and more a significant part of MESA's income, reaching about 60% of the revenue.

After the meeting we stayed for dinner, very not typical of hospital food with Chicken Marsala, Vegetarian Lasagna, Fried Rice and salad. We can't forget the desserts which were a brownie but prepared by a gourmet temptress offering sinfulness in every bite. They were so sinful some were observed to have more than one helping... gotta reload the carb machine, you know. After dinner there was a short program featuring Mayor John Davoli who gave to the group a proclamation that today was MESA DAY in Fostoria. He also gave the organization a key to the city, a first for the tour. The Fostoria Rotary President Ken Swint also made a great donation to the MESA project. Fostoria is like so many cities in the region, struggling to maintain normalcy while the economy crumbles around us. Both Ken and John commented on how important Rotary has been in making Fostoria a better place, in spite of all these challenges.

So ended Day Four, with sore legs, sunburned arms, full bellies, great memories, and a key to the city. Afterwards we all returned to our motel ready for a well-deserved rest for tomorrow. Tune in tomorrow for

an update of how we traveled from Fostoria to Defiance. We'll be back on a few roads we've ridden before and more beautiful Ohio countryside.