

Day One – Toledo to Port Clinton

After a fine evening Friday with many Toledo Rotarians and a good night's rest, we all met this morning at the Toledo Zoo. This was a fitting locale for our group of animals... the term hungry as a bear comes to mind. In fact we enjoyed our bagels and fruit amid the auspices of the Arctic Exhibit, which is governed by a Polar she-bear and her young cub.

A brief ceremony by Toledo Rotary and the president of the Toledo Promedica Medical Center along with kind words from District Governor Dave Dayne, was followed by a ribbon cutting ceremony that sent us on our way. Twenty-some cyclists eager to get going, most dressed in the aqua and blue tour jerseys, left the quietude of the zoo in the morning and entered traffic on Broadway. Our first challenge of the day was the Clayton Ave. high-level bridge, which bared its teeth at us in the form of expansion joints that liked to grab skinny tires. After that, it was mostly flat and straight roads out of town and into the countryside.

Cyclists all commented on what a beautiful day it was to start the ride. At nine in the morning it was in the 70s, the sun was shining but had some companion puffs of clouds as company in the air. All that changed in the next couple of hours as we ventured farther east, the sun getting hotter and the cloud cover changing from mostly sunny to partly sunny to kinda cloudy. Still all-white clouds though.

At mile marker 38 we landed at the Oak Harbor Golf Club for a lunch stop hosted by the Oak Harbor Rotary Club. Sandwiches and pasta salad, fruits, and lots of beverages hit the spot. With only twelve more miles to go we lingered there longer than normal, enjoying the fellowship among our own group and our new friends in Oak Harbor. Mark Hamilton and his fellow members showed us their true Rotary spirit.

Our last leg took us straight east to Port Clinton. Once here we found our hosts and our lodging quarters for the evening at the Trinity Methodist Church. This was the second time we have visited Port Clinton and we all recognized Dwayne Wade from before – mainly due to his infectious smile and positive attitude. The new club president, Lisa Byers showed us how accommodating the club can be. At first we were curious about how a church would house us all, but we soon learned they are ready for about anything here. A huge meeting hall with wonderful air conditioning, comfy cots, pads, blankets, sheets and pillows all looked very appealing. Dinner was a delicious offering, supporting the local firemen as they were having a fundraiser with chicken dinners, made for a win-win din-din for all.

While today's task was not the hardest we'll have all week, the appeal of the cots was more than some could withstand. By 7 p.m. there were 5 bikers down, as in down and out, zonked, and snoring audibly. At 9 p.m. three are still at it but the snoring has subsided.

So, the tour has begun. Our first day was mostly free of harm, most bikes behaved, the group had a lot of fun, approximately 60,000 calories were burned but another 60,000 were consumed, about 15 gallons of liquids were drunk (nearly all non-alcoholic), and we are looking forward to a restful night to prepare for what tomorrow might bring.

Many conversations were overheard among cyclists and host Rotarians, nearly all concentrated on MESA. Not everyone is fully updated on everything this fantastic project is and does, but a lot more people know more than they did yesterday. We collected quite a few checks along the route and that is partly what the tour is all about.

Tune in tomorrow as we discover what's going on in Sandusky, Huron, Vermilion and Elyria.