



Times-Gazette photo/Duane Martin

Ashland Mayor Glen Stewart, right, welcomes members of the Rotary Bike Tour, from left, Bill Pepple, Stephanie White, Herb DeLaPorte, Eric DeLaPorte, Paul Craun, Paul Smith, Tom Herberger and Bill Matijasic Wednesday at the Country Club of Ashland.

Rotarian riders stop in Ashland during fundraising tour of Ohio

T-G Staff Report

Twenty five bikers and Rotarians stopped in Ashland Wednesday as part of the 450-mile 2009 Rotary Tour for MESA.

After a full day of biking from Norwalk to Ashland, the group enjoyed dinner at the Country Club of Ashland hosted by the Rotary Club of Ashland.

The six-day event is a Rotary fundraiser for the Medical Equipment and Supplies Abroad program, which ships medical supplies to impoverished countries. Bikers from various rotaries collect sponsorships, and in the past four years, the event raised \$150,000.

The program began in 2005, when Ed Stewart, a Rotarian from Elyria, decided to take a bike trip to Chicago, where the Rotary was celebrating its 100th anniversary.

Stewart decided to make it an annual trip, but tweaked it to become a tour of Rotary District 6600, which is the Northwest Ohio region.

"It's a lot more than just fundraising," Stewart said. "We get to meet people from all over the district. We become friends."

Bikers stop each day for lunch and dinner hosted by various Rotary Clubs and stay at the homes of members, who make them breakfast and send them off in the morning. This year, 15 riders joined the group for the full tour. Others picked up at various towns, including local Rotarian and Ashland County Chamber of Commerce president Marla Akridge, who joined this morning in Norwalk. The next stop on the tour is Marion.

Those interested can follow the trip online at www.rotarymesa.org.