

STP Provides Annual Boost to Local Economy

11,000 Riders: Cyclists Traveled Through, Stayed in Lewis County as Mid-Way Point

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Approximately 11,000 riders made their way through Lewis County over the weekend for the annual Seattle to Portland bike ride, providing the local economy with a “substantial” boost, city officials said.

Lewis County is the midway point for the thousands of cyclers completing the over 200-mile journey, with Centralia College becoming a large hub for the ones staying overnight.

Along with the college, the chamber helps place bikers in local churches, schools and other establishments throughout the community, as well as private homes. The

local hotels and campgrounds also see a splurge of business as the cyclists find a place to stay.

The grounds at Centralia College were packed full of tents, as the green lawn turned into an overnight stay for the cyclists. Food, music, massages and a beer garden allowed the cyclists an opportunity to relax before they continued on to their final destination.

Chris Thomas, with Providence Centralia Hospital, said this year at the first aid station located on the campus, no major injuries were reported. Last year several riders were taken to the hospital, mostly because of the heat, but this year there were none, Thomas said, despite two who were recommended medical treatment but refused.

Out of the approximate 11,000 riders, about 3,500 ride straight through, completing their trip in one day. The rest stay in local communities at a time when the tourist season is just beginning, funneling dollars into businesses and restaurants in the area.

“Obviously with thousands and thousands of bikers coming into town, we need to remember that most of them have family or support teams that travel along. Not many are alone,” Alicia Bull, executive director of the Centralia-Chehalis Chamber of Commerce, said, adding that most have at least one person traveling with them in a vehicle. “The community is really alive for the few days.”

Although no estimate was available on the amount of local revenue the cyclists contribute, Bull said local businesses have shared positive results of business during the STP weekend.

“As the ridership grows, so does the financial impact,” she said. “We love to have these riders and their families in our communities.”

Along with added impacts to local businesses, the cyclists are able to get acquainted with the communities. For those traveling through Centralia on Saturday night, the increased amount of people on the streets was apparent. Several restaurant and bar owners in Chehalis also anticipated a large volume of out-of-towners, and said traditionally the STP weekend is good for business.

“They get to experience our city, see the lay of the land in a very unique way, and they also spend their money here in their overnight stay,” Bull said. “It increases our hotel stays and increases our sales tax revenue, let alone feeds money into our local establishments.”

As the bikers left on Sunday, the cities throughout Lewis County returned to business as usual, with their pockets slightly more full.