

Ladies On Spokes members like to ride side-by-side in their club gear — pink socks and matching tops!



The Good Times Keep Rolling with Ladies on Spokes

By Kristen Hale

Friendship. Camaraderie. Community. Fellowship. Encouragement. These are the terms that Ladies on Spokes founder Barbara Aldred and president Lana Carr easily throw around the Starbucks table while we discuss the impact of their organization over the years. And amazingly enough, I believe them, because I actually feel those warm

LOS members at Rally in the Valley, a ride benefiting the Oconee Forever initiative to conserve Oconee County's natural wildlife habitat and historical sites.



elements of community and camaraderie as they share stories about the seven-year-old club. I also feel a slightly rising sense of jealousy as I hear about all the fun these ladies have been having without me.

I'm kidding. Sort of.

"The women in our club are so loving, kind and encouraging. I can't imagine my life without them," says Barbara.

Ladies on Spokes is a women's-only Coweta and Fayette County-area cycling club, which officially started in 2008 with 25 members. It has steadily grown through the years, both in membership and impact, ballooning into a sprawling organization of 85+ members today. Barbara remembers when she first had the idea to form the group. "I just prayed that God would give me a couple of ladies to ride bikes with," she says. "I didn't know he was going to give me nearly a hundred!"

Though cycling is the main group activity, over the years the members have embraced a variety of athletic endeavors. "I like to tease that I am a tri-athlete," says Lana. "Can I run and swim? No. But I can bike and hike and kayak, and we do a lot of that as a group. We don't just cycle."

On any given day, you can find this spunky group of women cycling the Silver Comet Trail, hiking up at Amicalola Falls, or kayaking down the Chattahoochee River. "Really, we just all love the outdoors," says Lana. And they don't let the cold weather hold them back. "When the temperatures get chilly, we do our 'Walk, Talk and Shiver' – we walk around Lake Peachtree in pairs and take turns switching walking partners. This way, we get to know each other better and still get our exercise in." There is no exclusive trait that all the group members share. "We come from all walks of life. We are mostly women in our 40's, 50's & 60's, and we are all shapes and sizes," says Lana. That common thread of diversity amongst these group members unites them – and gives them lots to talk about.

And while they have fellowship, they enjoy a range of activity levels. From the devoted cyclist to the backslidden rider to the self-proclaimed "non-athlete," there is an open invitation for any woman to join this group and improve her physical fitness. "We are all ladies that have other things going on in our lives. Some are avid bicycle riders, but the majority of us just like to get out and exercise," says Barbara.

There are organized club rides throughout the week, on Mondays, Wednesdays and Fridays. The Friday ride, known as 'Pedal Pushers,' is specifically for new riders and those who haven't been on a bike in a long time. Tuesdays and Thursdays are pickup days, and most often those rides are posted on the group Facebook page. Oftentimes there is a Saturday ride out of Brooks and lengthier rides scheduled throughout the year.

A most impressive trek they embark upon is riding the Silver Comet trail 40 miles out towards Jackson, Ala., where they stop

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9:15 AM

SUNDAY WORSHIP
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WEDNESDAY LIFE DINNER
5:00-6:30 PM

WEDNESDAY LIFE CLASSES
6:00-8:00 PM

SOUTH CAMPUS

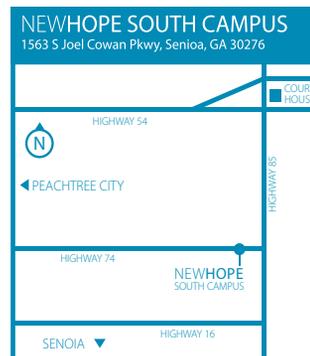
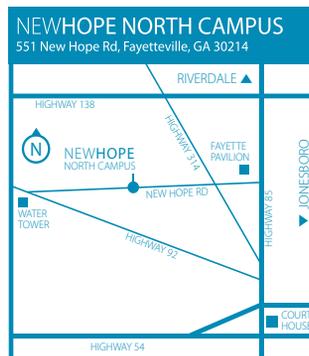
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LOCATIONS



NEW HOPE BAPTIST CHURCH

551 New Hope Road
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LOS club members enjoying a break (and peach ice cream!) on an afternoon ride.



LOS members preparing to ride in the annual Race for Riley, a course through Chattahoochee Hills, Ga. which helps raise funds for the United Mitochondrial Disease Foundation.

for dinner, spend the night in hotel, and then ride back the next day. My eyes must be extremely wide when they share about this particular venture, because they both assure me with a knowing smile and wink of the eye, "The ride is fun, but the fellowship afterwards is really what everybody comes for."

And fellowship is definitely a group core value. Whether it's a post-ride lunch and coffee, or a night out on the town seeing a play, there is no shortage of community happenings within the group. "We like to dress up and remember that we're ladies," says Barbara. "We love our fellowship time." It's no secret that these ladies are serious about having a good time.

For instance, when I ask if husbands are welcome to ride, they both sort of giggle and answer, "Not so much!" The message is clear: this is a group for laughter and girl talk. Gentleman, beware.

For those who are interested in joining, but intimidated about getting on a bike, Lana and Barbara enthusiastically encourage you to come anyway. "We've all been intimidated that first time. But the unknown will turn out to be a great thing." It seems that this athletic sisterhood is the real deal. And they are really into giving back to the community, as well.

Ladies on Spokes are proud supporters of the Fayette and Coweta communities, and enjoy giving back to organizations that are making a difference. "We support charities that support other people," says Lana. Past recipients of Ladies On Spokes support are the Real Life Center, Promise Place, Coweta Pregnancy Center, Bloom and Wellspring.

It's a community, it's a social club, it's a ministry, it's an outreach. So is there anything that Ladies on Spokes is missing? You! "We still have a lot of people to reach that we just haven't reached yet," says Barbara. "Come out and let us show you what you are missing. Before the day is over, you won't feel new anymore."

You can find more information about Ladies on Spokes on the website, www.ladiesonspokes.com, learn more about the newcomer's event, The Spring Spinoff, and see the calendar of rides and events on the Facebook page, www.facebook.com/groups/ladiesonspokes.



Kristen Hale is a freelance writer and blogger at www.oykristen.com. She writes about the triumphs (and sometimes failures) of motherhood, the therapy of cooking in her kitchen, the adventure of family travels and the challenge of keeping caterpillars out of her vegetable garden. She is a new homeowner in Peachtree City, Ga., where she resides happily with her husband and son.