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Local

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Bike ride to raise money for children's foundation

Kurt Madar The Daily Times

FARMINGTON — A local bike ride seeks to earn dollars for children while providing a whole lot of fun. Farmington's **Childhaven** Foundation is hosting its annual "More the Merrier" Bike Ride on Saturday, and it is sending out the call for local cycling enthusiasts.

The 20th annual extravaganza is a fundraiser, and in years past it was called a resounding success, organizers said.

The best part, according to **Childhaven** officials, is that the ride has a variety of mountain and road bike courses that are suitable for all ages and skill levels.

"Our goal is to get as many of the local riders out there as possible," said Jamie Church, the foundation's development director. "Last year we had 100 riders. This year we hope to get 300. It helps that we have something for everyone."

Church wasn't exaggerating. The merry ride truly has something for all ages and skills. Whether it's a kiddie tricycle course at the event site, or the mountain and road bike rides, the event is organized to attract riders from across the spectrum.

The \$30 ticket provides participants with a choice of three mountain bike rides through the Lions Wilderness Park or two road bike rides. The ticket also includes brunch and a T-shirt.

The best part, is that it not only provides a fun venue for pedaling under the sun, it also raises money for local children in need.

That's something that is desperately important in these uncertain economic times, said Erin Hourihan, the foundation's chief executive officer.

The money goes to cover a disconnect between funding and need, Hourihan said.

"This is a benefit for all of the programs that **Childhaven** supports," Church said. "It supports the emergency shelter, it supports children that are victims of abuse, neglect or abandonment."

Any extra funds received also support the foundation's foster care program which recruits, trains and licenses foster parents.

"It is also used to help support our safe-house forensic-interview program," Church said. "The program provides trained interviewers that ascertain if there has been any physical or sexual abuse. It also provides funding for family support services and therapy."

The fundraiser seeks to raise \$35,000.

Last year, the merry bike ride brought in approximately \$20,000, and the year before, it was nearly \$30,000, Church said.

"This is an important fundraiser," said Hourihan. "In any given year we don't have 100 percent of our funds. It varies year to year, and this current year has been one of the worst."

Whether it's cuts in state and federal funding or loss of grants, the foundation is operating in the red.

"We aren't seeing local community donations like normal," Hourihan said. "To make matters worse, we have written more grants this year than any other year and yet our success rate is lower than ever before."

Hourihan is pretty sure it isn't her grant-writing skills that are the problem.

"I am the same writer," she said, not quite laughing at herself. "Either I got really bad, or the economy is having an effect. Either way what that does is leave us in a deficit budget."

Fortunately, the foundation is tightening its belt.

"Luckily we have been very fiscally responsible over the last couple years so we can have a couple of bad years and still survive," Hourihan said. "The problem is, that like any business, we can't sustain that amount of loss for very long."

The ride is Saturday, and registration begins at 8 a.m. For more information, or to register early, call (505) 325-5358.

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