

A biker's view of Dimes Superide

Ken Thomas is an 18-year-old Westland youth who likes long-distance bike riding. He's a 1985 graduate of Franklin High School in Livonia who plans to go to college, study and study commercial art. He's earning money for school as a courtesy clerk at the A&P supermarket in Westland. On Sunday, Ken participated in his third March of Dimes Superide through Hines Park in western Wayne County to help raise funds for the fight against birth defects. The Observer asked Ken to let readers see the ride through the eyes of a rider. Following is his first-person account.

By Ken Thomas
special writer

THIS WAS my third time for cycling on the March of Dimes Superide and it was just as exciting as the first two.

It's always interesting to see all of the cyclists ranging in age from 7 to 70, and riding everything from all-terrain bikes to 13-pound racing bikes.

When I took to the trails on Sunday, Aug. 11, I saw some interesting things. There were plenty of families riding along with three or more children riding circles around their parents, and older people who were having just as much fun.

But whether you're seeing how fast you can ride it, or if you just want to spend a day in the sun, everyone seems to have had a lot of fun.

Everyone who had a sponsor form was given a card which was used to record the distance the rider traveled. (Entrants lined up pledges from sponsors for a certain contribution per kilometer traveled).

The 75-kilometer ride (approximately 50 miles) was a continuous trip on

Edward Hines Drive, stretching from Ann Arbor Trail in Westland to Outer Drive in Dearborn. All the riders had to do was ride back and forth a total of eight times. At both ends were March of Dimes workers who stamped the riders' cards.

THE SUPERIDE couldn't have been held on a more beautiful day. Although it was a little windy, there wasn't a cloud in the sky, and the temperature ranged from 65 degrees to no warmer than 80. Actually, it's been sunny for all three rides I've participated in — as far as I can remember.

Thanks to the state and local police, Edward Hines was closed to all traffic, giving riders a safe place to ride free of automobiles. So no one had to worry about big trucks or reckless drivers.

Cold refreshments or water were generously served to the cyclists by the workers at both checkpoints. It's a small thing, but we all enjoyed and appreciated this very much.

I started bright and early, 9 a.m., and finished in 3 hours and 21 minutes. It's not a race, but I think I was one of the earliest finishers. I lined up 10 sponsors from work who contributed between 5 and 10 cents per mile traveled.

I raised about \$52 compared to \$80 last year, but I didn't get my signpost sheet until late or I would have done better.

I didn't see any accidents although I did see a mother and child with bikes down, and the mother seemed to be trying to calm the daughter. But it didn't look like anything serious.

I rode alone this year, but I didn't run short of people to talk to. I was always chatting with another rider going by. I like riding and having people back you up. It's like in competition, when someone passes you, you sort of try to catch up. Just keeping up and pacing yourself is challenging.

I THINK I accomplished something to go 50 miles basically non-stop. I got into the Superide three years ago when I saw a pledge sheet in a bike shop and the ride was right here in Hines Park. I decided to try it.

The most enjoyable thing was just

finishing — and having a Vernor's at the end. I like long-distance riding, getting the bike out and riding a long way. The last two years, I rode on the church (Ward Presbyterian of Livonia) bike trips. They were 1,200 miles through the U.P. and Wisconsin in 1983, and

across the Blue Water Bridge to Toronto in 1982. We averaged about 50-60 miles a day.

You really feel good when you're done. My legs feel in great shape.

Overall, Bill Artell of the metropolitan March of Dimes office said the Hines Park Superide drew about 15 riders who earned \$1,000 in pledges, both figures being slightly under last year's.

He said the decision to hold the ride in mid-summer might have been a factor. Next year's Superide, probably will be held after school starts so flyers can be distributed through the schools. Additional Superides are scheduled for Saturday, Sept. 21, at Grosse Ile and Stoney Creek Metropark, and Sunday, Sept. 22, on Belle Isle. To sign up for one, call the Superide hotline at 423-3232.



Ken Thomas



Cooling off from the strain of pedaling 75 kilometers was Earl Nicholson of Redford.

County counts few outbreaks of AIDS

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"We do a screening test for the presence of antibodies (linked to AIDS)," he explained. "When the blood is found to be repeatedly reactive in that test, and in one or both of two subsequent tests of blood donated at the same time from different samples, that donated blood is (detected)."

"And a second test is performed. If it's positive, then we do counseling with that donor."

The positive antibodies test does not indicate that the donor has AIDS or will develop the disease, Shafer stressed. He estimated that less than one-fourth of one percent of cases are "repeat reactive" to the first set of tests. Of those, 20 percent react to the second test. About five of every 10,000 donors are counseled.

The Red Cross meets with donors whose blood samples contain AIDS antibodies. A staff nurse discusses the test results and generally advises donors to see their physicians for more evaluation.

The blood screening process began in March and those who have received blood since then do not risk acquiring the disease through transfusions, Shafer said. Those who received transfusions prior to March still have some risk.

"One of the difficult things is that (AIDS) has a very long incubation period — up to three years or more. Those

transfused prior to the middle of March will continue to have some risk. "It's extremely small — one in 250,000 to 500,000."

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