

McKee Classic hits the road Sunday**CYCLING****Festival added to 30th annual bike tour****from page 8A****BY PAMELA JOHNSON****REPORTER-HERALD STAFFWRITER**

Cyclists who hit the road for the 30th annual McKee Classic Bike Tour on May 20 will be doing more than enjoying a scenic route on two wheels. They will be helping nurses at McKee and other area Banner Health hospitals.

The race, in its 30th year, expects to draw 1,400 people and raise \$75,000 for the McKee Foundation's Nursing Support Fund. Participants in the tour, the first bike tour in the state this spring, have four different routes to choose from, all starting outside McKee Medical Center: 10 miles around Boyd Lake, 30 miles or 37 miles through the community or 62 miles. The longest route, for more serious cyclists, wraps around Boyd Lake, which is near the hospital, Horsetooth Reservoir west of Fort Collins and Carter Lake west of Loveland.

"It's a beautiful ride," said Allis Gilbert, executive director of the McKee Foundation. "We've got people who do all lengths of rides."

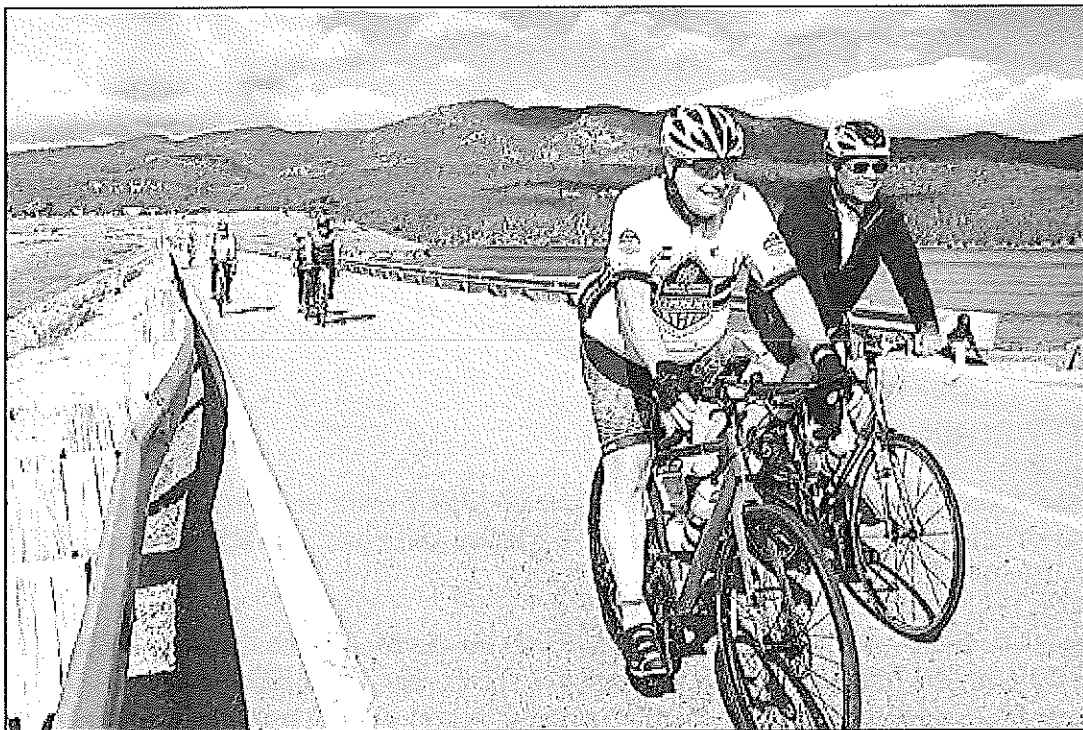
This is the 30th year of the race, which raises money for different health initiatives, but it is the first time the foundation will offer a festival after the ride. With activities and family fun, the festival also will offer three different food truck options, beer gardens from Verboten and a live bluegrass band, which for this event is named Bikeroo Bonsai, according to Gilbert.

Those participating in the tour will start early in the day; in fact, organizers expect those on the 62-mile ride to hit the road as early as 6:30 a.m. The festival, which is open to riders and non-riders alike, will run from 11 a.m. to 3 p.m.

"Even if people aren't interested in doing the ride, they can come out and enjoy a beautiful sunny Sunday," said Gilbert.

The forecast, according to the National

SEE CYCLING, 10A



Cyclists have four different length options for the McKee Classic Bike Tour, which is being held in Loveland and Larimer County on Sunday, May 20. Participants are pictured in the Carter Lake portion of the tour in 2015.

JESSICA BENES / Loveland Reporter-Herald file photo



Sunday will mark the 30th year the McKee Classic Bike Tour is held in and around Loveland and Larimer County. The tour offers four lengths of ride, the longest which hits Boyd Lake, Horseooth Reservoir and Carter Lake.

REPORTER-HERALD FILE PHOTO

McKee Classic hits the road Sunday

CYCLING

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Weather Service, is calling for sunshine that day with a high of 66.

Each year, the McKee Classic raises money for a different health initiative bringing in \$418,166 total from 2014 through 2017, according to Gilbert. This year's proceeds will benefit the nursing support fund for nurses at McKee, North Colorado Medical Center and Banner Fort Collins.

The money pays for training, recognition and other avenues to support nurses. Gilbert described it as "just a way for us to provide back to our nurses."

Recently, the nurses fund paid for two nurses to attend a national pediatric conference in Denver and for other local nurses to attend, and present, at a national conference on pain management, said Julie Roth-Carter, acute care nurse at McKee Medical Center. At these conferences, nurses learn about cutting edge techniques and new practices, and they return with ideas that can be implemented locally, she said.

"It's invaluable because it not only allows us to see what is going on across the country, but it also allows us to meet other nurses who are leaders in different areas," Roth-Carter said. "That's a good thing, making sure that we're practicing most evidence-based practices."

The McKee Classic Bike Tour begins at 6:30 a.m. Sunday, and the festival will begin at 11 a.m. Details are available online at mckeefoundationevents.com.

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Rangers learn the ropes at 'unique' school in Larimer County

Award-winning Larimer County Ranger Excellence School trains officers for the real world

By Pamela Johnson

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Park rangers encounter everything from stranded people needing technical rescues to dangerous wildlife to wildfires to people with mental health problems, and so much more.

This week, the Larimer County Department of Natural Resources offered new recruits a taste of what they might run into in the field at the eighth annual Larimer County Ranger Excellence School — a weeklong training that won a 2018 national award for excellence from the Parks Law Enforcement Association.

"It's unique," said Steve Gibson, a district manager with the Larimer County Department of Natural Resources who organizes the yearly school, taught mostly by rangers in his department and specialists from the Larimer County Sheriff's Office.

In fact, Gibson said there is only one other such school in the country, in North Carolina.

This year, 78 students are enrolled in ranger school, 30 of whom are new seasonal recruits for Larimer County and the rest from other parks and open lands agencies in Colorado and also from Ohio and Washington.

The students choose two classes per day from a curriculum that includes defensive driving, baton and pepper spray certification, drug information, ranger danger, rescues and survival Spanish.

Other sessions focus on dealing with transients, electronic bikes and drones as well as managing critical incidents, handling wildlife encounters and becoming certified in first aid, cardiopulmonary resuscitation and the use of an automated external defibrillator.

Joe Wilson, a professional actor with Twopenny Productions in Denver, and Larimer County Sheriff's Sgt. Timothy Sullivan led a role-playing lesson with Wilson pretending to be an angry homeless man illegally camped in a county park.

Sullivan showed the students the wrong and right way to defuse the situation, quickly learning that "Bob" was more than a homeless problem, but a veteran with medical issues, nowhere to go and in need of help that could be provided through resource agencies.

Wilson's company primarily works with law enforcement agencies to teach them ways to handle situations in which someone may have mental health or substance abuse problems, ways to avoid excessive use of force and injuries and to provide a solution.

"Our primary roles are people in crisis," said Wilson. "We give law enforcement officers of all stripes — deputies, rangers, police officers — an opportunity to work crisis intervention through trouble."

He added, "We're just looking for the opportunity to provide better outcomes through education, listening and knowing how to move the outcome to a better situation."

Gibson, a ranger for 15 years, said rangers do encounter these types of situations; they experience the gamut on trails and in parks and open spaces.

Just last week, he helped defuse a situation where a man who had taken a mind-altering drug was standing in the middle of the road outside Horsetooth Mountain Open Space, wanting to be hit by a car.

Instead of allowing the situation to end in an injury, Gibson and the ranger on duty talked to the man, worked with him, contacted his father for help, and ended up getting him to the hospital for a 72-hour mental health hold and, hopefully, help.

Within the past two weeks, too, rangers have helped with four rescues at Horsetooth Falls, including someone who fell and broke her pelvis.

The different training sessions at the school, which culminated with hands-on scenarios to practice various skills on Friday, offer the students what Wilson described as "just a taste" of what they will see in the field, plus the chance to earn certifications.

"We try to cover the gamut," said Gibson, noting that many of the students are young and do not yet have a lot of life experience. "We'd rather them see this in our school before they see it in the real world and get a little bit of experience under their belts."

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In Brief

Carter, Horsetooth expand boat ramp hours

LOVELAND — Boat ramp hours will expand starting Friday through the summer at Carter Lake and Horsetooth Reservoir.

Carter, west of Loveland, and Horsetooth, west of Fort Collins, will have ramps open from 6 a.m. to 10 p.m. seven days a week, and aquatic nuisance species inspectors will be on site during those times.

The boat ramp at Pinewood Reservoir, which is near Carter Lake, is closed for the summer and no motorized vessels or boats launched from trailers will be allowed on Pinewood; kayaks, rafts, float tubes and such are allowed.

During the Memorial Day weekend, May 25 through May 28, all three ramps at Carter Lake will be open from 6 a.m. to 10 p.m.

After the holiday, the North and South Shore ramps will keep those hours seven days a week, while the North Pines ramp will be open only Thursdays through Mondays, again from 6 a.m. to 10 p.m.

At Horsetooth Reservoir, all boat ramps will be open 6 a.m. to 10 p.m. throughout the holiday weekend. After that, South Bay and Inlet Bay will keep those hours seven days a week during the summer, while the Satanka ramp will open those hours Thursday through Sunday and on holidays. For the up-to-date schedule of boat ramp hours and information on required vessel inspections, visit larimer.org/boating. For info on entrance permits, visit larimer.org/natural resources.

Reporter-Herald staff

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Larimer County gives Loveland land to improve trail access

City proposes building new trail to Old St. Louis Natural Area

By Julia Rentsch

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The city of Loveland has accepted two parcels of land at no cost from Larimer County to secure a safer connection between residential neighborhoods and a natural area.

Access to the Old St. Louis Natural Area by pedestrians is "very difficult" due to the narrow width of St. Louis Avenue, states a council memo. The new connections will allow for a safe trail connection to the residential neighborhoods near Madison Avenue, Osborn Park and Winona Elementary School to the north of the natural area, 800-1016 S. St. Louis Ave.

The parcels of land are 1.96 acres and 0.91 acres, respectively.

The Loveland City Council approved the land transfer as a resolution as part of the consent agenda Tuesday. The council unanimously approved the consent agenda as a whole.

The 35-acre natural area has been developed with a parking lot and soft-surface trail. The city proposes building a new trail connecting existing trails with the end of South Madison Avenue. No new parking area is mentioned in the plan.

Though the land comes at no cost, the city will have to fund maintenance of the land and build a bridge across the Farmers Ditch with money from the countywide open lands sales tax.

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New trail section opens at Hermit Park area

Larimer County has opened a new 2-mile section of the Limber Pine Trail at Hermit Park Open Space, bringing the trail to 4.5 miles in length.

Hiking, biking and horseback riding are allowed on the new section of trail.

The first section of the Limber Pine Trail opened in the fall of 2017, so the Limber Pine Trail now extends 4.5 miles from the Moose Meadow Trail to Hermit's Hollow Campground, according to a press release.

The trail meanders through forests of pine and aspen trees and offers views of the surrounding mountains.

Parking for visitors who want to use the new section can be found at either the Kruger Rock trailhead or the Moose Meadow trailhead (the trailhead to Homestead Meadows), according to the release.

The trail can also be accessed from the Kruger Equestrian Campground, but there is no day use parking at the campground.

The release said the final section of the Limber Pine Trail, from Hermit's Hollow Campground to the "saddle" area of Hermit Park, is scheduled to open later in 2018.

The Limber Pine Trail and Moose Meadow Trail were built by Larimer County Natural Resources' trail crew, Larimer County Conservation Corps crews and dozens of volunteers.

Hermit Park Open Space is located 2 miles southeast of Estes Park and offers multi-use trails, campgrounds, cabins and a group pavilion.

Reporter-Herald staff

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