

Holiday **Hundred**

By Debra Tomaselli

South Seminole Rotary Club organizes cycling events to provide bikes to Central Florida children.

The idea surfaced over lunch in a local restaurant when a handful of buddies and fellow Rotarians were discussing ways they could help the community. “We are always holding dinners as fundraisers for our club,” says **Neil Solomon**, a board member of the South Seminole Rotary Club. “Then we thought—why don’t we organize an event that is fitness-related?”

Mike Martone, the club’s treasurer, agreed. Like Solomon, he is a cycling enthusiast. So it was only natural to envision a cycling event for the public where the proceeds support local kids.

The idea, when presented to the club, met with enthusiastic approval and Holiday Hundred, the club’s inaugural charity bike tour, was born. The event will be held Dec. 5 and will begin and end at Seminole State College in **Sanford**.

Riders can enroll online in 25-, 62- and 100-mile tours for a \$35 entry fee. Others can sign up as virtual riders, donating \$50 toward a bike or \$15 for a helmet. All participants will receive an event T-shirt, water bottle and an after party catered by Moe’s Southwest Grill.

“It’s not about the bike, it’s kind of a cyclist’s mantra,” Solomon says, referring to world-renowned cyclist Lance Armstrong, who wrote a book entitled “It’s Not About the Bike.” “But if you don’t have a bike—it is about the bike.” Hence, 100 percent of all registration fees will go toward purchasing new bicycles for underprivileged children throughout Central Florida.

“We want to get these kids bikes,” Solomon says. “Our club is big on education and big on kids, there’s a lot of school board people and representatives from kids’ charities, that’s where the idea percolated from.”

Organizers enlisted volunteers to direct riders on the day of the race, host refreshment stations, fix flats and clean up. They’ve tapped some to shop, assemble and store the bicycles. Others are making arrangements for the giveaway.

The South Seminole Rotary Club is composed of about 100 members, and more than 60 typically show up at the lively Friday morning meetings. Embracing



South Seminole Rotary Club members Mike Martone and Mike Herman push pedals so local kids can do the same.

LORI MARTONE

the motto of Rotarians worldwide, the group believes in “service above self.”

“One of our signature efforts is the Rising Achievers Program,” Martone says. Here, the club recognizes students who overcome momentous obstacles. “They may have had significant handicaps, or been homeless, but they’ve pulled it together and been successful. We recognize them at a banquet and award them with scholarships.”

The club’s work doesn’t stop there. Many members are involved in nonprofit organizations, sheltering abused children or granting wishes to

terminally ill kids. Others participate in environmental concerns and civic organizations.

The South Seminole Rotary Club built a Habitat House in Sanford, started an Interact program at Lyman High School, organizes Wekiva River cleanups, and serves the homeless on a regular basis. While much of their work is local, their boundaries know no limits. “We’ve built wells in Haiti,” Martone says.

“We have a lively group,” adds Solomon. There is laughter and chatter, brainstorming and planning amid the assembly. It’s a diverse crowd with a common goal.

“Our meetings include presentations, which may be a local charity, or something educational, but the underlying message is service,” Solomon says. “Rotary is not a networking venue. It is for people with a spirit to help others. It is a venue for people who have a lot of love to give.”

This December, that love will be in action as the cycling event pedals its way into the lives of unsuspecting children. “I’ve never won the lottery,” Solomon says. “But I imagine that, for these kids, getting a bike will produce something like that feeling. My hope is that they learn about an outdoor active lifestyle and understand that people care about them.” **L**

To learn more about the South Seminole Rotary Club’s work with the Holiday Hundred visit CentralFlorida-Lifestyle.com.