

Greenwich Time

<http://www.greenwichtime.com/scn-gt-911ride5sep02,0,5894483.story?coll=green-top-headlines>

Area cyclists ride to remember those lost on Sept. 11

By Rachel Stockman
Special Correspondent

September 2, 2003

Howard Merson and Michael Santini cycle from their Old Greenwich homes to backcountry Greenwich and back again most mornings, returning before their children wake.

On some days, other Greenwich residents join them to train for an upcoming 280-mile bike ride from New York City to Washington, D.C. The ride will be a memorial for those who died in the Sept. 11, 2001, terrorist attacks.

World T.E.A.M Sports: Face of America 2003 cyclists will depart from Battery Park City on Sept. 12 and ride for three days to Washington, finishing at the reflecting pool at the National Mall. World T.E.A.M. Sports is a Charlotte, N.C.-based nonprofit group that hosts sports events encouraging interaction between athletes with and without disabilities.

Many of the 600 participants in this year's ride were affected directly by the Sept. 11, 2001, terrorist attacks and are riding in honor of people who died, said Courtney Leddy, a spokeswoman for Face of America 2003.

Merson, 42, is riding in honor of his friend Michael Rothberg, who lived in Old Greenwich and worked for Cantor Fitzgerald, a bond brokerage that lost 658 employees in the attack on the World Trade Center.



WACHOVIA

WHAT CAN A
S W I N G
TEACH US ABOUT
MANAGING
MONEY?



WACHOVIA

"I didn't know Michael's parents," Merson said. "But I sent them a letter to tell them I was riding in honor of their son. They sent me one back that was so touching, and said that Michael's favorite activity was cycling."

Merson, who was 10 blocks from the World Trade Center during the attacks, also has many relatives in Oklahoma City who witnessed the 1995 bombing there.

"Terrorism has affected me in many ways," he said. "I feel very passionate about this ride."

Santini, 38, is riding in honor of another Cantor Fitzgerald employee, Mike Horn of Lindbrook, N.Y.

"I didn't know Mike personally," Santini said. "But my wife and her family knew him well."

Greenwich residents Richard Comeau, Eric Anderson, Fred Brooks and John Palmer also plan to make the trip to Washington. Other bikers will include three disabled athletes from Afghanistan, a team of 30 riders from Israel, the Palestinian state and Jordan, 12 cyclists from Norway, three people from Kosovo and a small team to represent the victims of the bombing of the U.S. embassy in Nairobi, Kenya.

"We are trying to bring people together that would not necessarily ride together in unity," Leddy said.

A volunteer staff of 65 will follow the cyclists by car and provide medical aid, water and food, she said. They will be joined by more than 500 volunteers who will help along the route. A documentary film crew from Israel also will travel with the riders to make a film for television in the Middle East, according to the nonprofit group's news release.

Participants pay \$500 to cover the trip's cost. They are encouraged to raise at least \$1,000 to aid other World T.E.A.M. Sports' programs, such as character-building outreach programs, grants and scholarships for athletes and funding for sports events for the disabled, Leddy said.

Merson said he and Santini have both raised \$3,000 so far.

Copyright © 2003, Southern Connecticut Newspapers, Inc.