

SPOKE TALK



A short volunteer history of Tour de Steamboat

July 20 marks the 16th, 17th or maybe 18th year of the nonprofit Tour de Steamboat. We would like to say it more precisely, but truth be told, we are not really sure.

The event started in 1985, when Kent Eriksen organized a group of locals to go out and race the Oak Creek Loop, no swag, no aid stations, no finish line barbecue. Just a group of people out enjoying a day on their bikes. The current event sees over 1,200 riders, 250 volunteers and five different routes, including the new Gravel Gruel course.

We have riders on E-bikes, tandems, recumbents, hand bikes and boring, old, titanium road bikes built by our very own Brad and Kent at Eriksen Cycles and Bingham Built. The highlight of the day is watching our diverse riders on their assorted equipment come in with that sense of accomplishment, no matter which course they rode. Shut up, legs.

As Co-Event Directors Katie Eriksen and I happily look forward to aid station loading day. We load 100 watermelons, 15 boxes of bananas, 207 Fritos, 5,000 Oreos and countless other goodies into boxes heading out to the seven on-course aid stations. The muscles built balance out the calories consumed when needing to try one of everything.

Our amazing volunteers are kitted out with specially designed shirts, lunch, rider swag and all the M&Ms they can devour in one day. Our youngest volunteer this year will be Maura's 1-year old and the oldest volunteer —well, who can say?

We have had Caroline and Timmy grow up as volunteers at Sidney Peak —they're now running the station whilst mum rides the event. Lee at Kremmling Aid has decided this is her year to ride, so she has handed over the reins to long-time volunteers Clint, Nina and Beverley. The Alders drive in from Yampa on Friday to pick up their aid station, then organize their crew

SLINGSBY, 16



SHELBY REARDON/STAFF

The eventual winner of the Youth 7-8 Emerald Endurance bike race gets off to a quick start on Wednesday as part of the Town Challenge.

Racing as a family

Emerald Endurance allows parents, kids to enjoy biking together

Shelby Reardon
Steamboat Pilot & Today

STEAMBOAT SPRINGS — Don't let the name fool you, the Steamboat Springs Town Challenge doesn't have to be a challenge.

The series of bike races, held every other Wednesday, breaks the competitors up into more than a dozen different groups, with routes of varying distances, appealing to bikers of all capabilities.

"I think it's just a great opportunity for people of every ability, every age group, to come out and participate and enjoy the sport together," Steamboat Springs Marketing and Special Event Coordinator Emily Hines said. "It's awesome to see all the young kids, all the way up to the older people who are participating."

Nearly the entire Reynolds family competed in the Emerald Endurance race at Emerald Mountain on Wednesday. Eva and Ellie, both 12, competed in the 11-12 race, a 3.75 mile loop. Delia, age 9, competed in the race for 9- and 10-year-old riders, a slightly shorter 3.3 mile race. Meanwhile, younger brother Isaac, 4, opened up the evening by competing in the Tot race, which was just 0.2 miles long.

Eva said she enjoys going uphill, while twin Ellie said she prefers going downhill. Evening the family out, Delia admitted



SHELBY REARDON/STAFF

The Tots kicked off the Emerald Endurance bike race on Wednesday as part of the Town Challenge.

she'd rather ride on a flat course.

"I'm just thankful that they like biking as much as we do," their mom, Kira Reynolds said. "I think it's a great sport for around here. We live up north, so we don't live right in town, but we do a lot of things in town. We do it for fun and for being around other people."

Chris Skinner, visiting from Denver, stumbled across the Town Challenge race. "I was biking here a couple days ago and saw some of the trail markings for the race," he said. "I was like, 'Hey, there's a

race going on. Let's see if we can do it."

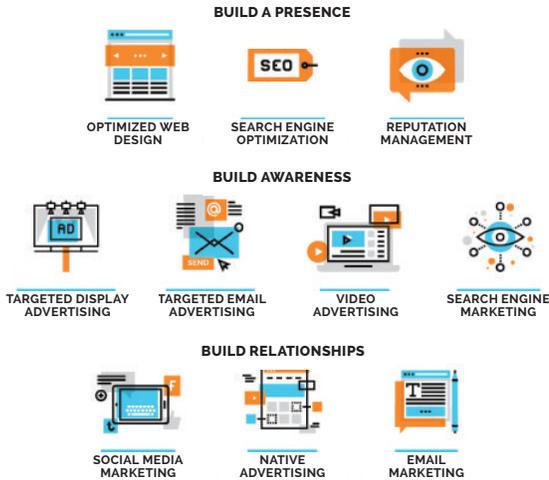
Ahead of competing in the expert 35-49 division, Skinner cheered on his 8-year-old son, also named Chris.

The younger Skinner raced in the 7-8 division, pedaling 0.7 miles before watching his father start a 15.25 mile ride.

"I like that you can pass people by going fast," the younger Chris Skinner said while eating a post-race popsicle. "I like to go fast."

RACE, 16

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RACE

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As kids zipped into the final stretch, parents pulled their phones out to snap pictures before dashing off to greet their child. There was no shortage of high-fives at the finish line. With the blood pumping and energy running high, the young competitors lapped at free ice pops and scooped up toys from vendors while parents scrambled to keep track of bikes and helmets.

While the bike-friendly community of Steamboat offers ample opportunities for young riders, Hines thinks the Town Challenge is unique because it's so frequent.

"We have races every other week throughout the

summer. Right now, we actually have two back to back, this week and next week," Hines said. "There's just a lot more opportunity for the little guys to get out there and practice their skills."

Emerald Endurance was the third in a series of seven races that continues with the Buffalo Pass Hill Climb on July 17.

Following the four youth races, the pro-open competitors were seen off at 6:10 p.m. and in the next four minutes, six more groups started. The men's expert races were broken up in to three age groups, 19-34, 35-40 and 50 and older. Meanwhile, the singular women's expert division as well as the men's and women's single speed

classes took off up Emerald Mountain.

Leaving the starting gate last were the youth 16-18 group, men's sport divisions (also divided into three age groups), the women's sport division and youth 13-15.

"There's really something for everybody," Hines said. "Having the opportunity to bring people together, it truly is a community event. We do get some folks from out of town, but ultimately this is for the locals."

Results will run at SteamboatPilot.com and in Friday's Steamboat Pilot & Today.

To reach Shelby Reardon, call 970-871-4253, email sreardon@SteamboatPilot.com or follow her on Twitter @ByShelbyReardon.

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for the over 800 tired riders they see.

And let's not forget about the party crew making peanut butter, banana and jelly sandwiches at Gore Pass for the 116 and Gravel Gruel riders. Some people even volunteer for more than one shift, and there are others who ride and volunteer. Kind hearted or crazy?

Along with our volunteer board of directors, we have people from Denver, Grand Junction and countless Routt County locals helping us throughout the week. From the patient water jug filler, to the returning registration crew, to the cheering course marshals, to the beautiful souls that come in at 5:30 a.m. to lift heavy things — we say "thank you." We couldn't do it without your

help because this is a community-run Routt County event.

So, if you find yourself with a few hours on July 20, come join the volunteer fun at the Tour de Steamboat. For additional information, email me at abislingsby@hotmail.com or listen to my Australian accent at 970-819-0781.

Abi Slingsby is co-director of Tour de Steamboat.

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