

Cyclists ride to promote safety

Event honors GE scientist killed by car

By **BRYAN BUTLER** Gazette Reporter

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NISKAYUNA — For Bill and Laurie Cox and Henry Wilkie, Saturday's David T. Ryan Ride for Safety Awareness had special significance.

The three riders, all members of the Mohawk Hudson Cycling Club, were among 240 participants in the event held to celebrate the life of Ryan, a GE research scientist who was struck and killed by a car while on a training ride on Riverview Road in June.

Each of the three also has been struck by a car while riding a bike, and they jumped at the chance to help raise awareness and educate the public about road safety.

"Look at the odds. Here all three of us have been hit my cars," said Laurie Cox.

Bill Cox said Ryan's death made him stop and think.

"For me, when David Ryan was killed, I shuddered," he said. "I wasn't angry or anything, I was just like, 'Whoa.' That very, very, very easily could have been me, because I know the route he was traveling very well. I do it three or four times a year, the same circuit we're going to do today."

Bill Cox noted that Ryan, who was struck and killed by a car operated by 18-year-old Joshua Paniccia of Niskayuna, was the third area cyclist to lose his life in automobile accidents in the last several years. Paniccia, meanwhile, has pleaded innocent to charges of manslaughter and criminally negligent homicide in Ryan's death and is free on \$20,000 bond awaiting trial in Saratoga County Court.

"I'm very concerned about it, and felt that something really nice will come out of this," Bill Cox said. "We've got a huge turnout today, and I think this is going to be an annual thing. . . this could really be a big fall event."

John Noonan, with another group of riders, said he was at the event for the same reason.

"We're here to give support to safety awareness on the road," he said. "That's something anybody can relate to. I almost got hit by a motorcycle yesterday."

Laurie Cox, whose nose was broken when she was hit by a car while riding her bike, said she viewed the ride as a way of turning a negative into a positive. "Something good's going to come out of it," she said.

Walter Cicha, the ride's organizer, said David Ryan, who was a friend, would have approved of that outlook.

"Dave was always a very positive-looking guy," he said. "He never looked back at anything. He was always looking ahead, and that's what we're trying to do here. I think he would be very happy to see what's going on here."

The event, scheduled for the day after what would have been Ryan's 33 rd birthday, went off in groups of 30 to 40 riders who traced the 29-mile course that Ryan was following when he was killed. A moment of silence was planned at a makeshift memorial set up at the site of the accident, Cicha said.

An 11-mile children's ride and a one-mile fun ride were also offered. The first 200 paid participants received long-sleeved Tshirts.

Cicha, like Ryan a biker and research scientist at GE, said that the money raised from the event would be used to endow a scholarship in Ryan's name. "[One of the goals] is to raise money for the David T. Ryan Memorial Scholarship Fund, which we're planning to give to exceptional high school students in physics, math, sciences, who are also athletically involved, and who we hope will follow in the tradition of David R y a n a s a n e x c e p t i o n a l academic/athlete," he said.



ANA ZANGRONIZ
Gazette Photographer

A group of bicyclists travels along Riverview Road in the Rexford section of Clifton Park Saturday as participants in the David T. Ryan Ride for Safety Awareness. Ryan, a GE research scientist, was killed by a speeding car while bike riding in June, according to authorities.