

Roadside memorials recall deaths of bicyclists

Ghost bikes left at sites of fatal crashes aim to remind drivers to share the road

By, Dan Higgins Staff writer

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CLIFTON PARK -- A memorial to a bicyclist killed by a reckless driver was placed on the spot of the 2004 crash.

The memorial, a bent road bike painted in white, is known as a ghost bike, and it joins two other similar displays in the Capital Region.

The ghost bikes are part of a loosely organized national campaign to raise awareness about cycling safety, though the people who placed the bikes in the Capital Region are remaining anonymous.

The ghost bike in Clifton Park was placed to honor David Ryan, a 32-year-old researcher who worked at GE Global Research in Niskayuna.

Two other ghost bike memorials have been seen in the Capital Region. One on Fuller Road in Colonie marks the spot where Nicholas Richichi, 53, was killed Oct. 19 when his bicycle was struck by a recreational vehicle. Another ghost bike was placed on Broadway in Albany in honor of Jose Perez, 60, who was killed in August 2006 when his bicycle was struck by a sport utility vehicle.

Joshua Poppel, the director of the New York Bicycling Coalition, said he was familiar with the program but declined to identify those directly involved. He cited their wish to focus attention on the issue of cyclist safety rather than on themselves, he said.

The Web site <http://www.ghostbike.org> encourages people to organize themselves, paint a junked bike white, and place it near the site of a fatal crash under the cover of darkness. According to the Web site, the purpose of the program is to remind drivers to share the road with everyone, including cyclists and pedestrians.

In the collision that killed Ryan, Joshua Paniccia, 18, of Niskayuna, admitted he was traveling more than 80 mph on Riverview Road in Rexford when he struck Ryan. Paniccia pleaded guilty to criminally negligent homicide and was sentenced to 1 to 3 years in prison.

Higgins can be reached at 454-5523 or by e-mail at dhiggins@timesunion.com.