

Greetings County Commissioner Long, and Ms Grimes,

We are planning our fifth annual benefit bicycle ride, called Spokes 'N Spurs, on Saturday March 14, 2009. We are seeking authorization from your office to hold our event and to hire two or three Williamson County Sheriff deputies to assist with traffic control at the start of our ride.

First, let me give you a brief history of our ride:

Spoke 'N Spurs is a fund raiser event for Spirit Reins, a 501(c)(3) non-profit organization dedicated to providing hope and healing to at-risk youth, families in crisis, and foster families, through creative, hands-on therapeutic programs combining the healing power of horses with the beauty of the Texas Hill Country. You can find more information on the mission and purpose of Spirit Reins on our web site at [www.spiritreins.org](http://www.spiritreins.org). Spirit Reins is located at 2055 C.R. 284 in Liberty Hill.

We had our first benefit bicycle ride in March 2005, with 278 riders. In 2006 it grew to 414 riders, and in 2007 and 2008 we had between 600 and 700 riders. We have consistently had very positive feedback from our participants, and we have gained a reputation as one of the best rides in the Central Texas area. This year we anticipate between 700 and 1000 riders.

We have five different ride routes for our riders, with distances of 6 miles (a child-friendly family ride), 14 miles, 28 miles, 44 miles, and 62 miles. I have attached to this e-mail a PDF file containing maps of our routes. I have also attached an information sheet about our ride, in a Wordpad rich text (RTF) document.

This year our ride will be on Saturday, March 14, from 8:30 AM to 2:30 PM.

A summary of the safety steps we take for our ride:

The safety of our participants, as well as the safety of everyone in the area of our event, is our top priority. We post signs several days before our event to notify residents and motorists in the area of the date of our event. During the event, we post volunteers at every road intersection on the courses to assist riders to make the correct turn, and to warn riders of oncoming traffic on the road they are approaching. The volunteers are instructed that they do not have the authority to stop or direct vehicular traffic, and are there only to assist the bicycle riders in safely negotiating the intersection.

We have SAG vehicles (SAG stands for "Support and Gear") which cruise the routes to assist any cyclists that may have mechanical trouble or need any assistance along the ride, including transporting them to a rest stop or back to the ranch if they do not wish to, or are unable to, complete the ride for any reason. The SAG vehicles also sweep the route to make sure all riders are off the course at the end of the event.

The Williamson County Amateur Radio Club provides radio communication for our event, with a licensed HAM radio operator at the ranch, at each rest stop, and in each SAG vehicle. We also have medical first response support provided by the Motorcycle Special Events Team (MSET). These trained medical emergency first responders all have HAM radio communication onboard as well. Both radio networks have a base station at the ranch to coordinate all communication over the entire course and event. I am the safety chair of the event, and sit with the radio base station operators to oversee the event and make any safety-related decisions that may become necessary. This system has worked extremely well for us, giving us the ability to respond very quickly to any rider's need on the course. We are happy to say that all of these needs have been very minor, such as flat tires, broken spokes, sprained ankles, scraped knees, rider fatigue, and the like.

A few weeks before each event, I contact by telephone all the local law enforcement and emergency services organizations throughout the area that the course covers to notify them of the event, and follow up by sending them the details of our event and the course maps. I also work with Monique Trevino, Special Projects Coordinator for TxDot, Austin District, to fulfill all the requirements that TxDot has for bicycle ride events like ours.

And now to the reason for my request to your office:

Because our ride has grown, last year we decided to enlist the services of the Williamson County Sheriff's department to help with traffic control at our starting point, 2055 C.R. 284, south of Liberty Hill. We sought and obtained the Williamson County Commissioners Court's approval to do this. We divide the riders up into groups based on the course length they plan to ride, starting with the longest distance riders first because they tend to be the fastest riders.

The first group starts at 8:30, with each subsequent group starting a few minutes after the previous group has left the ranch gate. So we will have close to 1000 bicycles entering onto County Road 284 in a 30 to 45 minute period of time. The sheriff department deputies were a tremendous help in assuring that the start went very smoothly and safely. As we did last year, we would like to have Williamson County Sheriff deputies with patrol cars stationed on each side of the starting entrance onto CR 284 to improve the visibility for any approaching motorists. We would like to ask the deputies to stop approaching vehicles while each wave of bicycles leaves the ranch gate and enters CR 284. We feel that this will improve safety at this key point in our ride. It will also be more comfortable for our riders as they will not have to stop before entering the road to wait for approaching traffic. We will also use the services of the deputies as our riders arrive (by car) before the start of the event, since this will create significant traffic into the ranch between 7:00 and 8:30. We do not plan to actually stop any traffic for this. After the start of the event we will have the deputies move to certain key intersections to assist with traffic control and enhance safety.

Of course, we leave all traffic control decisions up to the deputies. Our expectation is that they would stop any approaching traffic for 3 to 5 minutes while each group of bicyclists leaves the ranch, and then let that traffic proceed before the next group starts. Based on past experience, this is likely to affect only a few motorists because of the low traffic volume we typically see at that time on a Saturday morning. We would not actually be closing any part of CR 284, but I understand that you consider any stopping of traffic a road closure, so we wish to seek your authorization to do this. We will comply with any and all requirements you may have for this. We would expect the deputies to stop our riders immediately if there were to be any emergency vehicles approaching on CR 284, or if any motorist expressed an urgent need to proceed. Again, the deputies will make all such decisions.

I have spoken with Lt. Gleason and Virginia Johnson of the Williamson County Sheriff Department, and they have explained that by hiring deputies specifically for our event we can be assured that they will be available for our event. They have explained to me the hourly charges and process for hiring these deputies, as well as that we need to get authorization from the County Commissioners before they can make these arrangements.

Please let me know if there is any additional information you would like from me, and what the rest of the process is for obtaining the necessary approval and authorization from the County Commissioner's office to proceed with our plans and make arrangements with the Williamson County Sheriff's department.

Thank you very much for your time and consideration.

Bill Hiebeler  
Spokes 'N Spurs Safety Chair  
512-567-5852

Copy of the attached info document:

### **Spokes 'N Spurs fifth annual bike ride to benefit Spirit Reins**

#### **Short Summary:**

**Event:** Spokes 'N Spurs 5th annual bicycle ride to benefit Spirit Reins

**Date:** Saturday March 14, 2009

**Time:** 8:30 AM to 2:30 PM

**Number of participants:** Estimated between 700 and 1000

**Location:** County roads between Liberty Hill and Burnet - See attached maps for routes.

#### **Contacts:**

Bill Hiebeler: 512-567-5852  
Kristine Weixel: 512-779-3868

#### **Details and more information:**

We are pleased to announce our fifth annual Spokes 'N Spurs bicycle ride to benefit Spirit Reins, a non-profit organization in Liberty Hill dedicated to serving at-risk youth and families in crisis. For more information about Spirit Reins please visit our web site at <http://www.spiritreins.org>

The ride is on Saturday March 14, 2009. It starts at the Spirit Reins ranch, located at 2055 C.R. 284 in Liberty Hill, at 8:30 AM. Riders have an option of routes that are 6, 14, 28, 44, and 62 miles long. See the attached maps for the exact routes. We expect all riders to be back at the ranch by 2:30 PM. We are expecting between 700 and 1000 riders.

We will be putting up route marker signs early on the morning of the ride, and removing same when the ride is over that afternoon. We are filing form 2057 "Application for Use of Texas Right of Way for Temporary Signs for Special Events" with the Texas Department of Transportation (TxDOT) for these signs.

We have volunteers to staff rest stops, and SAG (Support and Gear) vehicles that will be driving the route to assist riders with mechanical or medical needs, as well as making a final sweep to make sure all riders are off the course at the end of the ride. We are pleased to also have medical first response support provided by the Motorcycle Special Events Team (MSET), and HAM radio communication provided by the Williamson County Amateur Radio Club.

I am the head of the safety committee for the ride. I appreciate your support. Please feel free to provide any suggestions or ideas you may have to help make this a safe event for everybody involved.

If you have any questions or comments, please contact me:

Bill Hiebeler, Spokes 'N Spurs Safety Chair: 512-567-5852.

Alternate contacts:

Kristine Weixel, Lead Coordinator of Spokes 'N Spurs: 512-779-3868

Rhonda Smith, Executive Director of Spirit Reins: 512-585-0845