

History of The Village Bicycle Club (revised 12/9/15)

THE VILLAGE BICYCLE CLUB, TVBC, formerly known as The Villages Cycling Association, is located in the retirement community of The Villages. The club is open only to residents of The Villages. Its members are mostly senior citizens with a passion to ride, and the time to do it.

In 2002, Russ Buchanan (who still rides) and Jim Mount (who recently passed away) started the club with 30 members, and each month brought forth more resident members. They created a schedule of rides where riders of varying levels could take to the streets and ended each ride with a stop at the local coffee shop.

In the beginning, members rode three days a week, but after a short time, they found that members were meeting on their own to ride on non-scheduled days. So today, you can find an organized ride any day of the week.

As the club grew in size, the members became better riders and people were moving from entry level bicycles to more advanced road bikes. We currently have rides that go out daily starting at El Santiago Recreation Center at 8:30 am in the winter and 8:00 am in the summer. The ride groups vary in distances from 20 to 60 miles, and with speeds that average from 14 to 20+ miles per hour. Now that may not sound like a lot, but remember most of us are seniors - our average age is close to seventy. The club has grown in size each year with a current membership of 140 riders.

Most rides go outside The Villages and stop for a rest break mid-way though the ride. Rides usually return to Panera Bread in Spanish Springs by 11 am. Cyclists who live outside of The Villages or visiting guests are permitted to ride with the club but must fill out a visitor agreement.

Many of our members have participated over the last several years in the cycling events at the Florida Senior Games, and have a wealth of medals to show for it. The Village Bicycle Club has organized multi-day rides at Flagler Beach, Jekyll Island and Fort Myers, and traveled to France in 2004, Germany in 2005, France in 2007 and Belgium in 2011. A trip to Spain is planned in 2016.

Club members are very active in supporting the local community, and have a yearly drive to collect unwanted bicycles from their neighbors. These bicycles are cleaned and repaired before they are given to the Sumter County Sheriff's Department for distribution throughout area. This year over 325 bicycles were donated.

TVBC is also a member of the Bicycle Friendly Advocacy Group here in The Villages. Last year The Villages received the Silver Award for a Bicycle Friendly Community from the League of American Bicyclists. This is the first time this award has been given to a municipality on its first attempt at achieving this recognition. Some of agenda items we are striving for here in The Villages are: educating police officers and the general public on traffic laws as they apply to bicyclists and motorists; increase the amount of parking for bicycles in commercial areas within The Villages; and more bicycle lanes and Share the Road signs throughout The Villages.

The Village Bicycle Club meets on the second Monday of each month at the El Santiago Recreation Center at 7 pm. Safety issues are often discussed and demonstrations on repairing flat tires or other bicycle repairs are conducted, as well as interesting cycling related guest speakers from outside the club.

One of our biggest goals is to promote bicycle safety and give our members an opportunity to ride, socialize, and enjoy cycling - improving one's health becomes a by-product. If any further information is needed, please go to our website at www.TheVillageBicycleClub.com or contact the Club President, Clay Smith, 352-396-3171, or 68gamecock@gmail.com.

Please come out and join us!