

Monster Cookie Ride returns for 45th year



Monster Cookie Ride coordinator Hersch Sangster tightens a pedal at one of the bike repair stations at Keizer Rapids Park, where the 2021 ride begins. Submitted by Helen Caswell

BY HELEN CASWELL
For the Keizertimes

“We’re starting up the Cookie Ride again,” said Hersch Sangster of the Salem Bicycle Club, “and we’ve got cookies galore!”

Sangster is coordinator for Salem’s 45th Monster Cookie Bicycle Ride, an event that draws bicyclists from around the country and even internationally, and folks who are eager to enjoy the glories of the Willamette Valley in a non-competitive and welcoming environment.

This year’s ride has three options for riders who come out on Sunday, Aug. 29th. Some will want to tackle the Big Cookie (62 miles), others the Half a Cookie (31 miles) and for newbies and

youngsters, there is the Mini-Cookie, a family ride that begins two hours after the Big Cookie group has left and runs 6.2 miles.

The event is traditionally held in April, but the 2020 ride was shelved due to COVID, and this year’s was pushed back.

Back in 1976, when Sangster and other bicycle enthusiasts developed the ride, a whopping field of only 12 riders participated.

“All were relatives that felt sorry for us,” he joked.

But more members of the Salem Bicycle Club, and their friends, quickly joined in the fun. One year the Ride hosted more than 2,000 cyclists,

including bikers from Europe, Mexico, Australia and other countries.

Sangster is anticipating a smaller group this year, perhaps 500 riders, due to COVID. This privileged bunch will have a great day, according to Chris Hoy, Salem City Councilor and enthusiastic biker.

“Monster Cookie is a wonderful ride

for people of all skills,” said Hoy. “The Salem Bicycle Club has been sponsoring this wonderful event for 45 years, while opening up the world of organized cycling to so many.”

Hoy, who has participated in the Ride many times himself, added, “This ride is a confidence builder for those who aren’t sure of their skills.”

The fundraising event promotes bicycling, bicycle safety and this year, safer bike routes to schools in Salem and Keizer. It will also be promoting the City of Keizer’s bike helmet program.

The Monster Cookie of 2021 has a new starting and ending point in Keizer Rapids Park.

“It’s the most fun ride in the Willamette Valley and a beautiful route,” Sangster said. “If you have not been out in the Valley this year, you’re going to see filbert orchards, hop fields, vineyards and cornfields. Mt. Hood, to the east, is right there.”

The longest route, at 62 miles, travels north on French Prairie Road with a rest stop at the Zielinski Farm along the way, and finds a pleasant halfway point at the picnic area at Champoeg State Heritage Area. Lunch will be served there to those that have ordered it, and others will bring their own.

Mary Ann Sangster was the original baker of the famous “Ride” cookies in the early days - until the numbers of participants grew too large. She said she enjoys everything about the day.

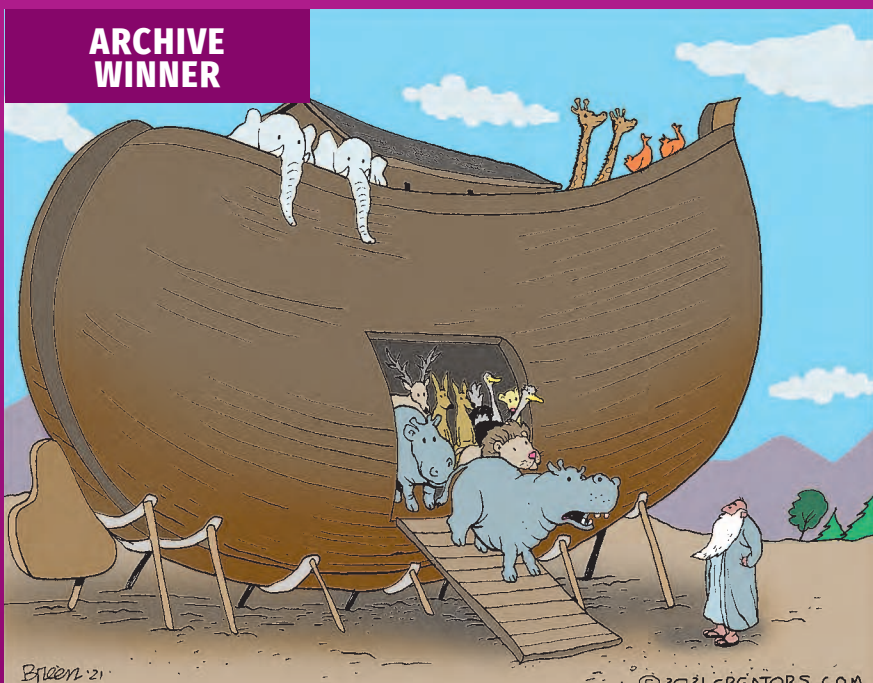
“It’s a wonderful social event. You can see other people’s bikes, and see how



Caption It!

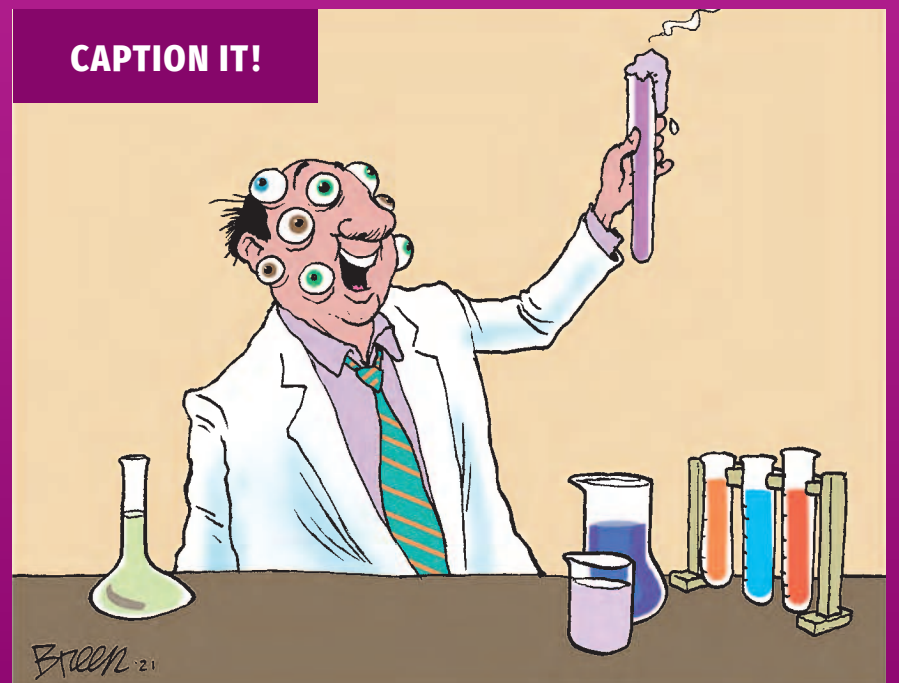
By STEVE BREEN

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