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Jul **Canal bike tour stops in Chittenango**  
**16**

Farah Jadran Pike 07/16/09 

Six days into the 11th annual "Cycling the Erie Canal" bike tour, cyclists have made their way to Chittenango. Hundreds of riders began to arrive to the Chittenango Landing Canal Boat Museum around 6:30 a.m. today Thursday July 16.



Riders stopped to take a breather, use the restroom and eve check out some of the museum exhibits on the way.

Today on day six, the cyclists stopped in Burnet Park in Syracuse and then toured the trail to Chittenango. The final stop for the day will be at the Fort Stanwix National Monument in Rome. Today's path will cover about 53 miles.

The tour started in Buffalo July 12 and has a fleet of 525 riders, total.

The riders are a diverse group, in that the youngest participant is four years old and the oldest is 82. There are also several families travelling as a group and riders from 49 states and three countries, including Germany. Because the 8-day trip covers 400 miles, there is extensive support that is put forth by the New York Parks and Trails.

A major part of the support team consists of 50 volunteers who are in charge of driving vehicles with mechanical and medical support back and forth as the riders go to ensure no one is left behind.

On the bike, are two "sweepers" who make sure that no one falls behind them and that all are riders are cleared from the current rest stop. This year's "sweepers" Jack VanOlden of Fair Lawn, N.J. and Jon Cary of Hobo Junction, N.Y., were at the museum today taking a much-needed rest to prepare for the rest of the day's trip while making sure that no one had fallen behind.

"It's our job to make sure no one falls behind," Cary said. "Failure is not an option."

VanOlden said their job is to stay in the back of the pack, the tour isn't a race, but rather a chance to tour the canal and ride as a group.

Handing back with the "sweepers" before getting into his support vehicle was New York Parks and Trails Director Martin Daley of Albany.

Daley is keeping track of the support and gear vehicles, or SAG vehicles that were helping the cyclists on tour. SAG cars pack up and unload cyclists' gear at the beginning and at the end of each tour day.

"Our job is to drive along the trail's path," Daley said. "A lot of times we will double back and make sure everyone is accounted for."

The tour concludes July 19 after a ride to downtown Albany.

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