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### Passing Through

Cycling tour stops in Canajoharie on way to Albany

By EDWARD J. HUNT, The Leader-Herald

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CANAJOHARIE - A tent city sprung up on the Canajoharie High School lawn Friday to house about 500 bicycle riders from across the country. They were participating in the 12th annual Cycling the Erie Canal tour, a 400-mile-long ride from Buffalo to Albany.

Martin Daley, tour participant and project director for Parks & Trails New York, a nonprofit group dedicated to promoting parks, trails and open space in the state, said the purpose of the tour is to make the Erie Canalway a state Thruway for bikers.

"We want the upstate communities that lie all along the trail from Buffalo to Albany to reinvest in themselves," he said. "Many of these folks consider this bike trip a vacation and people from all over the country come here to experience the Erie Canalway and the history along the way."

One of those vacationers, 82-year-old Bill Hunter, drove from Scottsdale, Ariz., to take part in the ride. An avid cyclist since the 1974 oil crisis, Hunter was the oldest rider in this year's journey.

Gabby Zeller, 9, of Woodsboro, Md., was already excited about coming back and riding the trail next year. Her parents, Fran and Cindy, and sister, Kayla, 12, seemed content to finish this year's tour.

Volunteering for the tour, nurse Laurie Bennett of Geneseo, Livingston County, reflected back on the weeklong trip that would end today in Albany.

"You see so much more on a bicycle than you ever could in a car," she said. "It's really amazing that they dug this canal across the whole state. You can't see that in a car. You get hooked." Bennett, riding in her sixth tour, was travelling with her husband, Richard, and daughters Samantha, 17, and Jesse, 15.

"The Erie Canal is integral to the history of New York state and the entire country. It's this living, breathing history and all the towns along the way that people come here to enjoy," Daley said. "And, perhaps more importantly, they come here to spend their money in upstate New York and support and take advantage of this world-class resource."

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George Ward performs for the group in the high school auditorium.

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