

El Tour Broadens Its Support in the Tucson Community

BY KATE HOLDER

When Perimeter Bicycling found itself without a title sponsor for this year's El Tour de Tucson, it asked the community for help. The many friends and supporters of El Tour – old and new – stepped up in response.

"We are so grateful for how the community came together to ensure that El Tour continued this year," said Richard DeBernardis, El Tour's Founder and Director.

The lack of a title sponsor created a \$250,000 gap in El Tour's \$650,000 corporate sponsorship goal. The event costs \$1.8 million to produce; of that total, \$500,000 is covered as in-kind support, and \$1.3 million is paid out in cash expenditures. Of the \$1.3 million, about half is covered by corporate sponsors and the other half is covered by bicyclists' registration fees. Corporate sponsorship is key to keeping rider fees down.

DeBernardis noted that title sponsorship money is getting harder to come by, due in part to the weak economy and to competition from the growing number of bicycle events produced regionally and nationally.

To make up for El Tour's shortfall, several current corporate sponsors like Rosemont Copper increased their level of support. So did Pima County and the City of Tucson. "The county and the city increased their funding because they recognized that El Tour has a major economic impact on the community," DeBernardis explained.

Indeed, one study estimated that El Tour injects upwards of \$18 million in economic activity into the Tucson metropolitan area every year, second only behind the Tucson Gem and Mineral Show. The League of American Bicyclists has credited El Tour for helping to elevate Tucson to a Gold-level Bicycle Friendly Community. Numerous magazines have listed Tucson as a top-ten bicycling town.

"El Tour de Tucson has played a major role in establishing Tucson as one of the world's top cycling destinations," said Brent DeRaad, President & CEO of Visit Tucson (formerly Metropolitan Tucson Convention and Visitors Bureau), one of El Tour's many sponsors.

"The event is part of Tucson's culture and it raises substantial funds for local charities. We're proud that so many people across the globe have come to know Tucson because of El Tour," DeRaad added.

Casino Del Sol played a key role in El Tour's expanded outreach strategy. The resort is in its second year of a three-year contract as El Tour's Presenting Sponsor, making it the highest single sponsor of the ride this year. DeBernardis explained, "Casino Del Sol's commitment was critical to our efforts to find new sponsors and to ask current sponsors to support El Tour at a higher level."

El Tour secured over a dozen new corporate sponsors, and it also received donations – many for the first time – from several individuals, as well as support from non-profit organizations.

When the lack of title sponsorship created a cash-flow problem in the early part of the year, DeBernardis asked individuals and organizations to consider giving Perimeter Bicycling a loan. Several did including bicycle advocates Jean and Jim Gorman. Others gave cash donations in lieu of a loan, ranging from \$300 to \$20,000. "We couldn't have made it without their help," DeBernardis said.

As this article went to press, El Tour still had a sponsorship gap of \$56,000 although DeBernardis was confident that the gap would continue to close. He also said the 31st El Tour will go on as scheduled, adding, "It's good for us to have an increased number of smaller sponsors instead of one big one, that way more of the community is invested in El Tour, which really reflects El Tour's theme this year: *Better Together Through Bicycling.*"

Friends of El Tour

... are individuals, families, non-profit organizations, businesses and major municipalities who gave "cash" funding to Perimeter Bicycling to ensure the continuation of El Tour. Simply speaking these are the "friends" who came together through bicycling to save El Tour from going out of business when Perimeter was unable to find a title sponsor for 2013. Perimeter Bicycling and our entire community owe its future existence to these "Friends of El Tour".

MAJOR FUNDING ORGANIZATIONS

Casino Del Sol Resort
Citi
City of Tucson
Diamond Ventures
HSL
Pima County
Rosemont Copper
Sanofi
Transamerica
University of Arizona Medical Center (UAMC)

SUPPORTING BUSINESSES & ORGANIZATIONS

AGM Containers Controls, Inc.
Alvernon Optical
America by Bicycle
Anheuser-Busch/Michelob
Bike Accident Attorney, PLLC
Catalina Community Services
CenturyLink
Clif Bar
CP Graphics
Denny's
El Charro & Sir Veza's Restaurants

Envision Eyecare Center, P.C.
GEICOGenesis OB/GYN-Desert Insurance
Golden Eagle Distributors - Michelob
Greater Arizona Bicycling Association (GABA)
Intuit
KineticEdge.com
McDonald's
Metro Restaurants
Pactimo
Performance Bicycle
Picor Commercial Real Estate
Pizza Hut
Real Gift Foundation
REI Tucson
Rio West Development & Construction
Royal Kia Tucson
Rusing Lopez & Lizardi, PLLC
TNT Illinois Chapter
TREK Bicycle
Tuff Shed
Ventana Medical
Visit Tucson
Volk Co
XanGo, El Tour's Official Wellness Drink
Zuckerman Community Outreach Fund

INDIVIDUALS & FAMILIES

Alter, Sandy R.
Baker, Scott K. & Rudrud, Dan
Barry, Dr. Pat & Envision Eyecare Center
Clanagan, Russell & Patti of Ovilla, Texas
Day, Susan of Tucson, Arizona
DeGuzman, Dr. Armando & Patricia
Gorman, Jean & Jim of The BRAD Fund
Harris, Charlotte in memory of Michael Harris
Holder, Kate of Alexandria, Virginia
L'Ecuier, Paul & Family
Lenhart, Jim & Blanche
Maciulla, Dr. Greg & Family
Madden, Kevin of Madden Media
Pierson, Richard of
Pierson Construction Corporation
Unger Family, Dr. Evan & Susan

In Memory of Dave Sitton, Tucson Icon and UA Wildcat Broadcaster, who brought El Tour its "first official sponsor" – Budweiser/Golden Eagle Distributors (1/17/55 - 8/12/13).