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JULY 19, 2010

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**SCENIC BACKROADS, HISTORIC CAPITAL AND AMISH COUNTRYSIDE HIGHLIGHT OF
DELAWARE'S 24TH ANNUAL AMISH COUNTRY BIKE TOUR SEPTEMBER 11**

DOVER, DE -- From the serious cyclists looking to increase speed and distance to the family of four seeking relief from concrete and city streets, Delaware's 24th Annual Amish Country Bike Tour, set for Saturday, September 11 in Dover, DE, is a "must-do" event.

The tour consists of five loops: 15, 25, 50, 62 and 100 miles starting in Dover, the historic Capital of the First State, and rolls through Delaware's little known Amish country west of the city limits. The first stop at 7.5 miles is the Amish Schoolhouse. There, cyclists get to "meet and greet" with our Amish neighbors who will served home-baked pies and cookies.

New this year at the Schoolhouse will be live entertainment provided by folk musician Sandy Shalk as well as the band Celtic Harvest. Celtic Harvest, (pronounced Kel'-tic) is comprised of five Americans with family roots in Ireland who decided to join forces in 1996 to play tunes and songs that either originated in Ireland and Scotland or that were a product of the people who carried that tradition to the New World. The band's music includes tunes (melodies without words) composed by fiddlers and whistle players and a blind harpist who played for the gentry of the great houses of 17th Century Ireland. The songs come from all over the map -- Ireland, Scotland, England, Canada, Australia, and America -- written by pop stars, folk legends and anonymous balladeers.

The flatlands tour takes cyclists past beautiful farms where the Amish can be seen hanging wash or performing farming chores such as harvesting and plowing with their draft horses and handmade farm implements, while Amish children enjoy games of a simpler time. Several Amish businesses are located west of Dover, including a general store, furniture shop, quilt shop and greenhouses.

"The tour also passes Fifer Orchards," said Linda Kurtz, Chairman of this year's Bike Tour. "Fifer's is a local favorite, and we encourage our visitors to explore the farm where fresh produce can be obtained along with jellies, fresh-cut flowers and other local products."

Fifer's has a rich history: In 1919, a Virginia farmer named Charles F. Fifer fell in love with the land of central Delaware. Upon discovering the moderate climate and hearty soil of this agriculturally rich region, he bought three farms and moved his family to Delaware. Soon, he was growing apples, peaches, pears and grapes. These were shipped to faraway points from the Wyoming train station (the station still exists today and cyclists will pass it during the bike tour). Today, Fifer Orchards covers 2,500 acres and includes apple, peach, pear, nectarine and plum orchards, sweet corn, asparagus, soybeans, lima beans, peas, pumpkins, tomatoes, cut flowers, green beans and grain crops along with several other crops that are grown exclusively for the Fifer stores.

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Depending on their chosen route, cyclists can enjoy three additional food and rest stops located at beautiful country churches, and featuring healthy snacks, sandwiches and beverages served by volunteers. Cyclists can also take in the historic sites in Dover, including free admission to the Old State House, Biggs Museum of American Art and the First State Heritage Park Welcome Center and Galleries. Cyclists can also visit Dover's historic "Green," named among the top 10 public spaces in 2009 by the American Planning Association.

Because this year's bike tour falls on the anniversary of "9-11," there will be a special "Blessing of the Bikes" ceremony at the start of the tour. Blessing of the Bikes is similar to the age-old tradition, blessing of the fleet, a centuries-old tradition originating in fishing communities and seaports. A blessing from the local priest was meant to ensure a safe and bountiful season. The Blessing of the Bikes will be carried out by a Chaplain from Dover Air Force Base. To recognize and salute our troops, bike tour participants are encouraged to donate phone cards, cases of bottled water or monetary donations to the non-profit USO Delaware.

Bike tour participants may start between 8 and 10 a.m. Registration fee, which includes bike tour map, goodie bag, up to four food and rest stops including the famous pie stop, after-tour party and catered picnic lunch, is:

- **Now through August 25:** \$35/adults; \$15 ages 5-16; under 5, free;
- **August 26 - September 9:** \$50/adults; \$20 ages 5-16; under 5, free;
- **September 10-11:** \$75/adults; \$25 ages 5-16; under 5, free; and
- **Family rate:** \$75 for 1 adult and up to children 16 and under; family rate only available for those who pre-register.

For the second year, a 25-mile competitive bike race on a separate loop will help raise funds and awareness for prostate cancer. It is sponsored by Bayhealth Medical Center and its staff of physicians. Race participants start at 7 a.m. Registration fees for the competitive race are \$45.

Those participating in the bike tour will be treated to a free after-tour party featuring live music by the Todd Stonesifer Band, a three-piece rock and roll band performing original music and cover songs in the classic style of The Rolling Stones, Dire Straits, Neil Young and Pink Floyd. The after-tour party includes a catered barbecue picnic meal. Additional activities are planned for Legislative Mall including demonstrations and yard games.

Proceeds from this year's bike tour will benefit the Central Delaware YMCA, the Amish Schoolhouse education program and the Bike Tour fund. Proceeds from the bike race will benefit PROCAP, a prostate cancer research organization. All organization benefactors are non-profit organizations.

Online registration is now open at www.visitdover.com, or by calling Kent County Tourism at 800-233-5368. Checks, Pay Pal, MasterCard and Visa are accepted through August 25.

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