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## As the spokes turn, riders experience sense of community

By Jill Sederstrom  
Daily Staff Writer

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The main street of Bedford is quiet and still in the morning hours Monday as last-minute preparations are being made to accommodate the almost 15,000 visitors the town expects to arrive within hours.

"It takes everybody in a town of 1,600 or plus," said Randy Simmons, head of the newly established beverage garden for RAGBRAI in the town of Bedford.

Bedford is the final destination on Monday's route for bike riders from all across Iowa and the country who are participating in the week-long RAGBRAI. Simmons said everyone in the town has helped in some way for the RAGBRAI preparations.

Bedford is the smallest community to ever host the RAGBRAI event twice; the first time was back in 1992, said Roger Brummett, area livestock specialist for the Iowa State extension center and co-coordinator of the event Monday.

"People on this event help each other, and it's a little like the culture we have here [in Bedford]," Brummett said.

The town has been preparing for months. "We basically had weekly meetings from you might say the first of March on to get things set up here," Simmons said.

Elenora French, co-coordinator of the events of the Bedford American Legion, said the volunteers there have prepared 160 pounds of spaghetti, 140 pounds of meat and 135 loaves of Texas toast for a dinner for bikers and friends Monday evening.

Jim Wilson, co-coordinator of the food preparations along with French, said they expect 1,000 people to come to the dinner.

"It is quite an undertaking," he said.

Bedford is not the only Iowa town hosting RAGBRAI bikers this week. The week-long event stops in eight towns across southern Iowa. Each day bikers ride between 45 to 80 miles a day, making stops along the way and finally ending in the host town.

RAGBRAI, a tradition in Iowa for 31 years, attracts people of all ages with different motivations for participating in the event.

Kickin' it with Team Blonde

Ross Buchele, who graduated from Iowa State in 1998, said he has been participating in the event, with his team, Team Blonde, for five or six years.

"The great thing about RAGBRAI is bikes, blondes and booze," Buchele said.

His team of approximately 22 people, most of whom are ISU graduates, travels on a large red bus with a patio on top.

When the team is not riding, Buchele said they stop at the last town before the final stop each night and party.

"It's an incredible experience, an incredible week," he said.

The team is sponsored by Leinenkugel beer, which provides three kegs and T-shirts to the team each year.

On Sunday, the first day of RAGBRAI, the team had already finished two of the kegs, Buchele said.

"The great thing is you don't have to be a phenomenal rider to do this," he said. Team Blonde has riders with a variety of experience.

Craig Streit was a 2001 ISU graduate in construction engineering and is a member of Team Blonde.

Streit said he has a lot of biking experience, once even biking across the country.

"I've done a lot of bike riding, but there is nothing else that compares to this," Streit said. "I couldn't ask for a better vacation."

The buzz of the race

Kim Graper, graduate student in landscape architecture, said she has been participating in RAGBRAI for 11 years.

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## ISU Triathlon Club

Several members of the ISU Triathlon Club and their friends also formed a RAGBRAI team. The group of approximately 14 people bike each day and then camp out each night in tents, along with hundreds of other bikers.

Adam Dreyer, sophomore in environmental science, said he enjoys cycling in the event.

"I didn't take a single day off work all summer just so I could do this," Dreyer said. "It is just really fun to be able to go so fast on a bike, something with no engine."

The ISU Triathlon Club members and their friends said they did not do too much training for the event.

"I didn't do anything different for this," said Andrew Fischer, graduate student in mechanical engineering and member of the ISU Triathlon Club. Fischer said he averaged about 17 miles an hour during the day Sunday.

Travis Konda, graduate student in civil, construction and environmental engineering, is riding in RAGBRAI for the first time this year. He said he wished he would have done more training.

Konda said he biked between 350 and 400 miles since May to prepare for the daily rides. "That's not enough," he said after completing the hot 56.7 mile ride Sunday.

Konda said he stopped in each town on the route. The U.S. Post Office has stands at each town and gives out stamps to the riders who stop, he said.

"It gives you a small history of the town," Konda said, "which is really kind of neat."

The ISU Triathlon Club members and their friends started the day's ride about 7 a.m. and finished the ride anywhere from 12--2 p.m. Sunday.

The members spent the rest of the day relaxing under the shade of a tree in their makeshift campsite, walking through town or visiting relatives.

Monday morning the team woke up and took off at 7 a.m. heading to Bedford, the final destination for Monday's route, 62 miles away.

The citizens of Bedford are excited and waiting for the 10, 000 bikers and 5,000 support people to arrive.

"We are thrilled to have them," Brummett said.

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