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Transcript

Speaker 1

It's time for the Outspoken Cyclist, your weekly conversation about bicycles, cyclists, trails, travel, advocacy, the bike industry, and much, much more. You can subscribe to our weekly podcast at outspokencyclist.com or through your favorite podcasting app to listen anytime. Now here's your host, Diane Jenks.

Speaker 2

Hello and welcome to the Outspoken Cyclist. I'm your host, Diane Jenks. Thanks for tuning in today. As the countdown to the holidays begins, and there are so many asks for you to just keep buying more, I'd like to offer up some alternatives and request that you think about year-end gift giving instead. This is the first of six episodes that I hope will tug a bit at your pocketbook and help a worthy organization. I'm actually beginning with an Ohio event, one which I can't believe I haven't covered in its 21-year history. Shame on me. The Pan-Ohio Hope Ride will roll out of the John Carroll University lot July 22, 2027. John Carroll is the university where the Outspoken Cyclist podcasts are uploaded to the internet and are lovingly archived. So I'm very pleased to be able to connect the two of them. Organized to highlight and raise funds for the American Cancer Society Cleveland Hope House, this small but mighty ride raised $1 million in 2026. Rather than often financially prohibitive hospital stays for some, Hope Houses, which are connected to hospitals around the country, offer a home-like respite for a caregiver and a patient while that person is in treatment. My guests are Brian Bortz and Susie Lawrence, co-chairs of the 2027 Ride, and they're here to tell us all about it. Hello, Brian and Susie. Welcome to The Outspoken Cyclist. Thanks for being my guests today. So Pan Ohio, the Hope Ride. I can remember when it first began, and Brian just told me 21 years. It's like, it just seems like it just started, but I know how that goes. And the idea of riding from a Hope Lodge to a Hope Lodge, and we will explain what that means, But it's great to know that it's doing really, really well. So we're gonna introduce each of you. Well, you're gonna introduce each of you and then we'll get going. Susie, introduce yourself and tell us how you became involved with the Pan Ohio Hope Ride and what your role is.

Speaker 3

All right, my name is Susie Lawrence and I'm a co-chair for the Pan Ohio Hope Ride. I've been with the ride for about 15 years. I got involved when my husband joined a work cycling team right after we moved to Ohio. He wanted to meet new friends he

could ride bikes with around the area. First Pan Ohio ride, I just followed him in the car with our little one and a half year old daughter and went to the zoo and did things along the way and fell in love with the mission, fell in love with the people I met and said I would start volunteering the following year. Over the last 15 years, I've been a SAG driver. And for the last 12 years, I've been the SAG captain, manning all the support vehicles on the road.

Speaker 2

Big job. Big job. Know all about that. Brian, tell us your story, how you became involved with the Pan Ohio Ride.

Speaker 4

Sure. My name is Brian Bortz. I'm also one of the co-chairs. I started riding in 2009. in honor of my mom, Susan, who is a breast cancer survivor. She's 23 years now, I believe. I did it once not knowing exactly what I was getting into, but kind of like Susie said, I really fell in love with the mission and the people and the event was so well organized that I came back and I've come back every year since.

Speaker 2

It's interesting how people sort of gravitate toward one event or another. We ran an emerald necklace tour for 15 years, and the volunteers, I think, have almost as much fun, if not more, than the riders. So it's always gratifying to talk with people who are involved with these events. So I don't know which of the two of you, or who of the two of you, I don't know who wants to answer this question. Give us some background and kind of a broad look at what the ride is and then we're going to drill down to some of the specifics.

Speaker 3

Sure, I can take that. The ride itself is a four day ride, cycling ride. We leave out of the Cleveland area and we go down all the way to Cincinnati. We stay at different colleges along the way. So our cycling route takes us from Cleveland to Worcester, Worcester to Westerville, right outside of Columbus. Then we go to Springfield, right outside of Dayton, and then into Cincinnati. We call it 328 miles. Any year it could be 330, 340, or it could be 320, depending on the different routes. We try to follow about the same route every year. It's a mix of Rd. riding and trail riding. Part of the OTET trail system is what we follow. We used to go from the Hope Lodge in Cleveland to the Hope Lodge in Cincinnati until the Hope Lodge in Cincinnati closed. Now we say we ride from lake to river.

Speaker 2

I grew up in Cincinnati. I know the river, the Ohio River. So this is just an off-the-cuff kind of question. I don't know which hospital the Hope Lodge in Cincinnati would have been

affiliated with, but do you have any idea of why it would have closed? It's such an important facility, and we'll talk about that a little later, too, but.

Speaker 4

I think that one was just underutilized for whatever reason. There is the one in Cleveland and I think there's one in, oh, I was at one in Kentucky. I think it's in Louisville. So there are others relatively close and I think it just wasn't getting used enough.

Speaker 2

Hard for me to believe that a lot of people in the Cincinnati area would not have a use for it though, because it is a really important piece of the cancer journey for so many people. So, and talking about that, of course, the statistics for cancer are mind-boggling and the costs from diagnostics and treatment and travel and overnight and all of that. And so the American Cancer Society is the beneficiary of the ride, I take it. Or is it the Hope Lodge itself?

Speaker 3

It's the Cleveland Hope Lodge itself.

Speaker 2

Oh, and it gets all of the proceeds of the ride.

Speaker 3

It currently gets all the proceeds of the ride. They just our proceeds were able to add an entire wing to the Cleveland Hope Lodge. Brian, keep me honest, I believe we added 12 suites.

Speaker 4

I believe so.

Speaker 3

To the current Hope Lodge, expanding the resources there. And we remodeled all 8 kitchens as well to the Hope Lodge currently. So it's being that Cleveland is such a huge biotechnology area with university hospitals, with Cleveland Clinic, There is always a use for the Cleveland Hope Lodge and we do work with other resources, other homes in the area like the transplant home for overages.

Speaker 2

So overages, meaning you could even use more space.

Speaker 3

Yeah.

Speaker 2

Yeah.

Speaker 3

Unfortunately, yes.

Speaker 2

So you talk about suites. Each of these suites has a kitchen.

Speaker 3

No.

Speaker 4

No.

Speaker 2

Okay. So explain how the Hope Lodge kind of works. It houses people who are undergoing treatment as well as families.

Speaker 4

Correct. Patients and I believe one caregiver, and they get a room, two beds, a shower, bathroom, similar to a hotel setup. But then the lodge itself also has a number of common areas where the guests can gather. So there are kitchen spaces so that they don't have to incur the cost of going out to eat or ordering food in. There are library type spaces. There are just lounge type spaces. There's laundry facilities. So basically everything that they need during their stay is provided for in one way or another.

Speaker 2

So then where does if, oh, but the Hope Lodge actually is a function of the American Cancer Society, not of the hospital.

Speaker 4

Correct.

Speaker 2

Okay, now I get it. Yeah, I've always told people if you wanna be sick, Cleveland's the right place to be. We've got amazing medical facilities here. Let me take a moment to reintroduce you and then we're gonna talk about the ride specifics. We're speaking with Brian Bortz and Suzy Lawrence. They are the co-chairs for the 2027 Ohio Pan-Ohio Hope Ride. And it goes from the Cleveland Hope Lodge, which I think is at University Circle.

Speaker 3

That's correct.

Speaker 2

All the way down to Cincinnati. So they call the one route now OTET, they used to call it the Little Miami Bike Trail, isn't that true? Or is that a different route?

Speaker 4

Little Miami is part of the entire OTAD, Ohio to Erie Trail route. And we actually start on the east side of Cleveland for the last few years. We've started at John Carroll. We kind of outgrew the facilities at the Hope Lodge, but we still go past it on our route. And then Different from the OTET, we stay on the paved trail. So like the first part of OTET is the towpath, but we just do roads and paved trails.

Speaker 2

So that's interesting that you outgrew it, which is not a bad thing. It's a really a good thing. John Carroll, just to give them a little plug, has been the sponsor sort of of the Outspoken Cyclist since 2010. That is where the podcast is housed. So I'm always happy to give them a plug. It's probably one of the best, WJCU is one of the best college radio stations in the country and they have the awards to prove it. Okay, back to the ride. So you say that the ride is about 320 to 330 miles, somewhere in there each year. What's your daily mileage? I mean, do you actually break it down into, you know, 25% a day, approximately?

Speaker 3

It's not equal due to the length from college to college. Day one, we try to keep in the 80 to 90 mile range. Day two is our longest. It is our 100 mile day. A lot of cyclists pride themselves for doing 100 miles. Our day two is a little shorter. It's usually some 75 to 85 miles. And then day three is usually around 90 miles as well.

Speaker 2

Wait, isn't it four days?

Speaker 4

Four days.

Speaker 3

Day 4. Did I say day three? Day 4.

Speaker 2

Yeah, you repeated day three as being day two. So the 4th day is what? The last day.

Speaker 3

90.

Speaker 2

That's a lot of miles per day. So there's a considerable amount of training involved there.

Speaker 3

Can be.

Speaker 4

Yes.

Speaker 3

There can be. But we also give a lot of ways to help the cyclists along the way. We have on average 14 to 15 SAG vehicles. that help cyclists from water stop to water stop if they have any kind of mechanical issues, maybe they're feeling a little dehydrated. We do have survivors and current cancer patients who do ride, so we help them along the way. We offer a Pan Ohio Express bus at lunchtime. So if you just wanna ride in the morning and wanna take the bus back to the next college, you can do that. We also offer single day rides or two or two day rides. So you don't always sign up for the whole four days?

Speaker 2

That's reasonable. A lot of people can't take that much time or a lot of people aren't willing to ride 300 and some odd miles. Very interesting. I saw the jerseys. Okay.

Speaker 3

It's the do it yourself. Take your own two, 3 28. So because people aren't able to take the extra time off or maybe they have a family wedding or other plans during the ride, you can sign up or you still raise money. You still bring awareness to the program and then you can do your 328 however you want. We have people that walk it. We have people that swim 328 miles in a year. We have people that read. There's lots of different ways that you can make 328 your own.

Speaker 2

That's a really generous way of offering the event. I know it started out as probably just a ride, but expanding like that is good because it includes so many other people. I guess you have a goal for 2027. What's your fundraising goal?

Speaker 4

Fundraising goal? Well, this past year we passed $1,000,000 in fundraising with just over 300 riders on the road. And so we're looking to do that again to hit the $1,000,000 mark.

Speaker 2

Wait, so it's $1,000,000 in the one year ride?

Speaker 4

Correct.

Speaker 2

Good for you. Do you have teams or just individuals?

Speaker 4

Both.

Speaker 2

Okay.

Speaker 4

Some people ride on their own, some people ride with a team. And we have a lot of friendly competition among teams also for fundraising and among our top individuals too, because we track both top teams and top individuals. So there's a lot of friendly competition going on for who can be at the top.

Speaker 2

Yeah, well, I've never met a boy cyclist who didn't have some competitive idea about riding ahead of the guy in front of him. So yeah, I get it. I totally get it. Without revealing any names, who was-- not who. What was the top amount raised last year, do you know, by a single rider?

Speaker 4

Oh, we had-- it was over 60,000 for our top rider last year.

Speaker 2

That's a lot of money. That's great. You know, knowing all those people who are willing to put their money in your basket is pretty cool. So let's do a little bit of the breakdown of the ride for 2027. Is registration already open?

Speaker 4

Yes.

Speaker 2

Okay. So we want to tell people how to do that. And what do you get with your, what is the, is there just a plain entry fee or is it a pledge for so much money?

Speaker 4

So there's a registration fee, which lets you participate in the ride. It includes your transportation to or from the end. It includes all your meals. It does not include lodging. We pay a nominal fee to stay in the dorms. And then there is a fundraising minimum that you're asked to meet. So for this year, it's $1,850. that people are asked to raise if they are riding for all four days. Our average per participant last year, though, was almost double that. So we have a lot of people who go well above and beyond the minimum.

Speaker 2

So of course, there are lots of pictures of people in Pan Ohio jerseys. Are jerseys included? Or is that an extra?

Speaker 4

Well, yes, the event jersey is included, but then we also have what's called the Dynamo Club for people who raise $5,000 or more dollars and they get another special jersey. But if you raise $1,328, you earn the event jersey. And we encourage people to wear their event jerseys on the last day of the ride. First day, most people will wear their team jerseys. So we start as teams and we finish as one. Nice event jerseys.

Speaker 2

That's nice. All right, so here come a couple of the other questions. Cyclists, food. What kind of is on the road for them and how often will you have rest?

Speaker 3

We have four to five water stops every single day. We have our lunch stop. We have food in all the SAG vehicles along with hydration. So we'll have water and then we have all different kinds of powders and Gatorade bottles as well. The food, we have fresh fruit, we have crackers, we have candy, we have protein bars. A lot of our cyclists have their own routines, so they carry some of their own fuel or energy with them. But we also have plenty of items for the casual rider or, if you just want to pick up some M&Ms because you need a little energy.

Speaker 2

Well, everybody, it's peanut M&Ms. Let's get it right now. Everybody wants peanut, unless you're allergic to peanuts. I get that. wouldn't work for you. That wouldn't work for you. I know I have a lot of other questions about the ride, but my guess is a lot of this is answered on the website.

Speaker 4

Yes, we have a very comprehensive website, POHR.org.

Speaker 2

POHR dot.

Speaker 4

And you can find information about registration and the event itself. There are fundraising tips, there are announcements, there's kind of a schedule of how things go.

Speaker 2

Do you have a max number of riders that you want to cap at any point or are you happy in the 300, 400 range, somewhere in there?

Speaker 3

We're happy in the three to 400 range. We don't have a cap. But on average, we have 3 to 400 register and then we will have maybe 15% drop or change into a do it yourself 328 for the most part. The website also includes volunteer opportunities. We have multiple ways to volunteer, multiple ways to donate, You don't just have to be a SAG driver. We have four day volunteers that travel as a caravan with the riders all the way down to Cincinnati. They help with driving trucks, loading trucks, loading luggage, helping set up and take down at the colleges. I mean, those are just a few ideas besides working the water stops. We also have a lot of ways for sponsorships and those can be small sponsorships like sponsoring a water stop. And that's really just having your signage there, but you're welcome to also have your employees and make it a fun service day. It's just a couple hours that the water stop stays open as the cycle is moved through. What else do we have on the website? We have contact information and then you also can see all the different teams we have. If you're interested in joining a cycling team, anybody and everybody will accept you. I promise you, no one's going to turn you away. And even when you show up as a single cyclist day of, you will find 300 different people that would love to ride with you. We have seasoned cyclists that that go 18 to 20 miles an hour, and then we have casual cyclists who are more in that 10 to 12 miles an hour range. So it truly is a variety of cyclists for all ages, for all cycling types of people and you will never be alone on that road. I promise that.

Speaker 2

You do not encourage children. Is there a minimum age?

Speaker 3

We do not. We do not allow under 18.

Speaker 2

Okay. Yeah, that makes perfect sense. After all, we're talking overnight to begin with. Yeah. Very, very interesting.

Speaker 4

Just back to just to the when you had asked about the cap too, we find that where we are now kind of works really well just in terms of all the all the logistics because there were ride is so well supported and so well organized. And part of that is based on numbers. And also, we want to make sure that we have people who are committed to the mission and to raising the money. We don't want a whole bunch of riders who aren't going to do what we need them to do for the mission.

Speaker 2

Right. No, I get that. There's a small ride down in, well, it's all over the country. They move it. It's a Tour de Trees. And they keep it at 100 riders. And they raise a ton of money every year. But it's extremely well supported, like this ride appears to be. So I mean, I'm very well aware of Velosano and how big it is and how many thousands of people show up. Of course, it's been raining two years in a row, which I guess that's another question. What happens when you get rained out? have an option for them not to ride in the rain, not like they shouldn't. Cyclists should ride in the rain if it's going to be.

Speaker 3

We have lots of options. Like I said, we have the Pan Ohio Express bus that we can, that's always at our lunch stop. That's usually the middle of the ride somewhere. We can have a SAG vehicle bring someone who doesn't want to ride in the weather conditions up. We also, we have flags. So we have green, yellow, red, black. We have closed the route. Typically, it's closed for maybe an hour due to a storm coming through, tornadoes. But if we do see heat, we will close the route for the rest of the day. Cyclists are asked to get on a shuttle or the lunch bus or wherever they're at along the route, we will get them to the next college. Although we do have some cyclists who may break the rules and decide to pursue the route on their own.

Speaker 2

Yeah, they're stubborn.

Speaker 3

Find ways to help.

Speaker 2

I get it. I totally get it. Yep. They're stubborn. These riders, some of them. I'm going to ride every mile. I know how that. And by the way, you got to give them credit. You know that.

Speaker 3

You know, I am right with you.

Speaker 2

Yeah.

Speaker 3

So have you right there with the SAG group and I will hold their hand as they get in and I might kick their butt.

Speaker 2

Listen, I have had we used to do a ride, as I said, through the actually, no, this was the triathlon. I put on a half Ironman in the 1980s and a guy broke his collarbone at the first, coming down the hill in Metro Parks at the first rest stop, refused to get off the bike, rode all the way to 56 miles back to Metro Parks with a broken collarbone. And we had to literally take his bike away from him and not give him his run bag so he couldn't run the half marathon and put him in an ambulance. Stubborn. Stubborn. Wow. So I know I have more questions, but I think they're all going to get answered on the website. I guess the one thing we didn't talk about is what are the dates of the ride next year?

Speaker 4

So it's July 22nd, 23rd, 24th, and 25th. Starts on a Thursday, ends on a Sunday. We have a big kickoff celebration Wednesday night, so this year, July 21st. at John Carroll. It's kind of like our beginning of our family reunion. Everybody's super excited to see each other. We have a dinner there, usually a speaker. Typically, we try to get a guest from the Hope Lodge to come and talk to us to kind of tie in the mission there at the very start. Then we have a mass group start the first day, and then Rowling starts the rest. But yes, 22nd of July. through the 25th for 2027.

Speaker 2

Nice. Let's hope it doesn't get too, too, too hot next year.

Speaker 4

We're trying.

Speaker 2

I know. It's like we can't really predict that stuff, but we've had a big fall, that's for sure. Well, Susie Lawrence and Brian Bortz from the Pan Ohio Hope Ride for 2027. They were the co-chairs. For more information, go to pohr.org. Sign up. or make a donation to the ride. I'm sure they can donate without riding.

Speaker 4

Correct.

Speaker 2

And all the money stays right at the Hope Lodge here in Northeast Ohio. We don't do a lot of podcasts that are focused directly on our area, but this one's important. If you have any connection at all, and I think we all do to cancer people, either someone in your family, someone you know, this is a really important piece of the cancer story for people who have to be in the hospital, around the hospital for an extended period of time. So if you're interested in the Hope Lodges, you can also go to ACS, I think, American Cancer Society, and take a look at what the Hope Lodges really are about. And they're really important. Thank you so much for talking with me. I hope your ride goes extremely well for 2027. How about we check back in next end of July and find out how you did? Absolutely. Sounds great. All right. Thank you for having us.

Speaker 3

Deep for the fight, everyone.

Speaker 2

Say that again.

Speaker 3

Come for the ride, stay for the fight.

Speaker 2

Thank you so much. Have a wonderful rest of the year.

Speaker 3

Thank you. Thank you. You too.

Speaker 2

My thanks to Brian and Susie for joining me and telling us all about the Pan Ohio Hope Ride for 2027. It is never too early to plan for a four day, 328 mile ride. The Hope Lodge here in Northeast Ohio, which opened in 1995, offers 43 guest rooms staffed 24 hours a day, seven days a week. It is located in University Circle, close to both the main campuses for university hospitals and the Cleveland Clinic. Maybe this will be your go-to gift-giving event for this holiday season. For more information, log on to pohr.org. You can also find some photos and links at our outspokencyclist.com website. Our next worthy opportunity for your consideration is Talbot Thrive, a multifaceted advocacy organization in Talbot County, Maryland. The location sounds divine and the work they are doing is commendable. To make certain you don't miss an episode of the show, subscribe on your favorite podcast app or at outspokencyclist.com. Go to our Substack for more commentary about the year-end series also. I hope you're enjoying what has been a most fabulous fall with great riding and a hope for a reboot of some sensible thinking around safe biking and walking in the future. Thanks for listening. Stay safe. Stay well and remember there is always time for a ride. Bye-bye.

Speaker 1

Thanks for joining us today on The Outspoken Cyclist with Diane Jenks. We welcome your thoughts and contributions on our Facebook page. Or visit outspokencyclist.com to leave a comment on any episode. We will be back next week with new guests, topics, conversations, and news in the world of cycling. Subscribe to the show in your favorite podcast app and you'll never miss an episode. The Outspoken Cyclist is a copyrighted production of DBL Promotions with the assistance of WJCU-FM Cleveland, a service of John Carroll University. Thanks again for listening, ride safely, and we'll see you next week.