

*Albany Democrat Herald*

**500 Tour DaVita cyclists turn Waterloo Park into tent city**

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WATERLOO — A tent city has risen at Waterloo County Park, as members of the Tour DaVita team and associates prepare to welcome more than 500 cyclists to Linn County today.

That includes setting up 337 small tents — and driving 2,023 tent stakes into the ground — plus erecting a cooking/dining hall that is 100 feet wide and 180 feet long, according to Bianca Violante, DaVita HealthCare Partners spokeswoman.

DaVita HealthCare Partners headquarters is in Denver, Colorado.

Riders from around the U.S. will arrive at Portland International Airport and be transported to the campground where they will find nearly 500 bicycles waiting for them — some riders sent their own bikes ahead. And while they will undoubtedly enjoy the scenic beauty of the Willamette Valley over the next three days, they will be riding with a purpose: to raise money to provide kidney health screenings in developing countries.

“This is the eighth annual Tour DaVita and so far, we have raised more than \$5 million,” Violante said. “The total so far for this event is more than \$900,000 and we raised more than \$1 million last year in South Carolina.”

Unlike most years, this year riders will spend more than one night in the same base camp location.

“Usually we set up and take day every day,” Violante said of the plan to spend Friday, Saturday and Sunday nights at Waterloo County Park.

Violante said the set-up team includes 26 caterers — who source nearly all of their needed food items locally — 72 employees of Backroads, the company which sets up the campgrounds and equipment and 43 staffers from DaVita Healthcare Partners.

A major Tour DaVita goal is to recycle or compost virtually all food scraps and paper products used each day and volunteers will spend part of Saturday assisting at a food bank in Marion County as a community service project.

Some of the Backroads staffers drove to the mid-valley from Salt Lake City and others from as far away as Alaska.

“This year’s ride includes seven dialysis patients and two former dialysis patients who had kidney transplants,” Violante said. “One is from Aloha.”

Violanete said DaVita Healthcare Partners operates 36 dialysis centers in Oregon.

Since 2007, Tour DaVita has visited Tennessee/Alabama, Wisconsin, Michigan, Washington state, Connecticut/NewYork/Massachusetts, Iowa and South Carolina.

Riders are employees or family members of DaVita Healthcare Partners or dialysis patients.

They will cover about 250 miles over three days and are asked to raise from \$750 to \$2,000 each, plus pay their own travel expenses.

The ride begins at 7:45 a.m. Sunday with music by Lebanon High School students and presentation of the colors.

The ride will cover from 73 to 100 miles and will loop from Waterloo County Park east to Foster Reservoir, down to Holley, west to Brownsville, north to Lebanon and back to the park.

Monday, riders will have the option of traveling from the campground to Centennial Park in Woodburn, 71 miles, or taking a 100-mile route.

Tuesday, riders can choose a 65-mile or 82-mile loop based around Centennial Park.

A scout for Tour DaVita tour wrote about the proposed route, “This year’s route is beautiful, surrounded by mountains, rivers, lakes, farmland, vineyards and huge vistas. The course is relatively flat, especially on the first two days, with the third day introducing rolling topography. Quiet lanes, quaint covered bridges, country backroads and a cornucopia of productive farmland comprise the vast majority of this year’s route.”

He added, “The people are very cordial and cyclist-aware. On the road, drivers gave us a wide berth and were courteous and safety conscious.”

DaVita HealthCare Partners operates or provides administrative services to 2,074 dialysis centers in the U.S. and serves more than 163,000 patients. It also operates 73 outpatient dialysis centers in 10 foreign countries.

Corporate sponsors for this year’s Tour DaVita include Amgen, ASD Healthcare, Baxter International Inc., Golden Construction Development Company, Inc. and NxStage Medical, Inc.

For more information about the event, visit [tourdavita.org](http://tourdavita.org).

Linn County Parks Director Brian Carroll said he is “very pleased to be a part of this effort ... it’s quite impressive.”

Carroll said he Tour DaVita associates began contacting him in March.

He said DaVita HealthCare Partners has booked the 60-unit “A” loop, but the 60-unit “B” loop remains open on a first-come, first-served basis.

“The park remains open to the public, including disc golf and the boat ramp,” Carroll said.

Carroll said the entrance to the park will be closed from 7:45 to 8:45 a.m. Sunday when the cyclists take off en mass.

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