



THE RIDE FOR MENTAL HEALTH

THE RIDE FOR MENTAL HEALTH INSPIRES MEANING AND PURPOSE FOR RIDERS

Mission to “Ride Away the Stigma” Returns to New York’s Hudson Valley June 25-26

NEW YORK CITY and BOSTON (March 8, 2022) – With March designated as National Self-Harm Awareness Month and National Mental Health Month coming up in May, [The Ride for Mental Health](#), June 25-26 in New Paltz, N.Y., will further expand attention and awareness around the growing mental health crisis in America.

An uplifting weekend of cycling, camaraderie and fundraising in New York’s picturesque Hudson Valley just 90 minutes north of New York City, The Ride for Mental Health was founded in 2017 by Brooklyn-based attorney Mac Dorris. Dorris lost his son, Eric, then 21, to an accidental overdose as he struggled with mental health disorders.

The Ride is on track to surpass \$1 million in total donations to [McLean Hospital](#), the largest psychiatric affiliate of Harvard Medical School. It also provides an outlet for healing and connection for some who have experienced tragic personal loss due to mental illness. Riders Beth Atwood, Rich Sporer and Eric Mehlenbeck have each found community and purpose in the annual gathering.

Atwood, from Elma, New York, discovered the Ride after her brother Brent, younger by just 10 months, took his own life in February of 2021. He was 55, married, successful, and a father to three daughters, but clinical depression led him to suicide. Brent was also a devoted cyclist. At the Ride for Mental Health, Atwood found a way to honor her brother’s memory, and make a difference to others. She assembled a team of friends to ride with her and set a goal of raising \$1,000. They raised \$11,000.

“I was not prepared for how emotional the ride would be for me,” Atwood said. “It was so beautiful in the Hudson Valley, and there was such a positive vibe from everyone, I kept thinking how Brent would have been in his element there. When we finished, I just broke down in tears.”

Brooklyn resident Rich Sporer, a retired data analyst, was in drug addiction recovery when he signed up to learn cycling with the New York Cycle Club. The group met at 5:30 a.m. each day in Prospect Park, and Sporer bonded with fellow rider Mac Dorris who eventually opened up about his son’s struggles. It wasn’t until Eric’s untimely death that Sporer shared with Dorris that his twin sister had taken her life when they were 19 years old. Sporer has been a loyal participant in the Ride since the beginning. In 2020, when the event went virtual due to Covid, Sporer traveled to New Paltz anyway. He and Dorris completed the Ride together, alone.

“Mac is an inspirational guy, and that was a special day,” said Sporer, who understands the damage caused by the stigma of mental illness and addiction. “It made me feel good to know that I could help even one person.”

Mehlenbeck also knew Dorris from the morning cycling group. He too had lost a sibling, his younger brother, Kurt, to suicide. Growing up in a conservative suburb of Milwaukee, the stigma of mental illness, especially suicide, was profound. “We were never even aware of Kurt’s issues,” said Mehlenbeck. “Breaking down stigma is huge for me.” A graphic designer by trade, Mehlenbeck offered his services pro bono to Dorris, and has participated in the Ride every year. At the inaugural event in 2017, he rode

alongside Dorris' oldest son, Greg. "Most of us don't talk about mental health unless we're in a tough place," he said. "To be doing something meaningful, and have that experience with Greg Dorris in such an incredibly beautiful setting, was pure joy."

This year, Mehlenbeck, Sporer and Atwood will once again be among the hundreds of cyclists, volunteers, sponsors, and friends in what has become an eagerly anticipated homecoming of kindred spirits. Riders enjoy scenic routes of 14, 25, 50 and 100 miles among the rural landscapes and mountain vistas of the Hudson Valley. The Ride will return to full form this year for the first time since 2019, including a cocktail and dinner event for the top 150 fundraisers at the stunning Mohonk Preserve in the Shawangunk Mountains, and an open invitation barbecue at the New Paltz fairgrounds.

Anyone can support the Ride for Mental Health, whether as a rider (in person or virtually), as a volunteer, or simply by making a donation. There is no fundraising requirement for riders. Registration rates are currently discounted through March 31, returning to full price on April 1. Corporate groups, community organizations, teams and individuals can participate in the Ride and create their own fundraising pages. Sponsorship opportunities are available, and volunteers are needed.

Details are available at www.rideformentalhealth.org, by emailing info@rideformentalhealth.org and by following The Ride on [Instagram](#), [Facebook](#) and [Strava](#).

About The Ride

The Ride for Mental Health was founded by New York City attorney Mac Dorris, inspired by his son, Eric. A bright and funny boy, Eric struggled with mental health issues as a young man. He was eventually diagnosed with borderline personality disorder among other conditions, and tragically died of an accidental overdose at the age of 21. Mac, an avid cyclist, created The Ride to honor his son's life, and to shine a light of hope and caring for others. Eric's memory lives on in the important work being funded by The Ride for Mental Health, and in the moments of connection and camaraderie that make the event so rewarding.

Support for McLean Hospital

Funds from The Ride for Mental Health fuel a range of programs across McLean Hospital's multi-campus network. These initiatives include expanding access to clinical care for young people, scholarships providing financial assistance for patients and their families, development of a state-of-the-art academic and residential center for child and adolescent programs, public education and community training, and McLean's nationally recognized research and innovation. McLean maintains the largest neuroscience and psychiatric research program of any private psychiatric hospital in the U.S., exemplified by the Eric Dorris Memorial Research Fellowship. Since its inception, the fellowship has been awarded to four outstanding post-doctoral scientists, with a fifth fellow to be chosen in spring 2022. With the help of funding from The Ride for Mental Health, McLean Hospital continues to improve the lives of people and families affected by psychiatric disorders by advancing our understanding of mental illness, leading to earlier and more effective interventions.

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