

## **Annual bike rodeo draws almost 200 offshore workers**

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**Local News** - Almost 200 offshore workers showed up to the ninth annual community policing bike rodeo on Sunday afternoon at the Virgil arena complex.

As a Spanish interpreter provided the bicycling rules of the road for the Mexican farm labourers, members of Niagara-on-the-Lake's community policing committee cooked up hundreds of hot dogs and handed out just as many cans of pop.

Sgt. Edd Typer of the Niagara Regional Police was on hand, along with one other full-time officer and four auxiliary volunteers, to demonstrate hand signals and proper riding techniques on a marked course in the arena's gravel parking lot.

Typer, who was working in his seventh rodeo, says the program was started after there were "high incidents of traffic safety concerns involving offshore workers," in NOTL.

"We've found that over the years...we can share our concerns and also provide our safety concerns (to the workers) so they can know the rules of the road and obey them," he said, adding the goal of the rodeo is to teach the workers, whose primary mode of transportation in town is the bicycle, how to ride defensively.

Dave Mansfield and Martin Mazza installed reflective tape on workers' bikes, while Mazza brought a whole pickup truckload of donated bikes, the best of which were given away, along with bikes donated by the NRP, in a free raffle. The remainder of the donated bicycles will be stored in a local barn.

Workers having bike problems or in need of parts can stop by anytime over the summer, Mazza said, and they'll be able to search for a suitable part.

Door prizes were donated by local merchants, and as long as the workers signed a registration form they were all eligible to win one, said rodeo organizer Bill Dickson. The St. Davids Lions Club donated the barbeque for the event, while the municipal Parks and Recreation department gave the committee free reign of the Centennial Arena for the day.

Enlace, a charitable organization dedicated to helping new and temporary Mexican immigrants across Ontario integrate into Canadian life and culture, was on hand and provided some Mexican entertainment for the workers. Enlace representative Lourdes Borofsky said the bike rodeo is important to the workers because it keeps them safe on the busy roads of NOTL.

"They don't know the rules of the road, they don't have the safety," she said. "This event is very useful, the information they get is very useful."

The event also allows Mexican and Caribbean workers to meet each other and feel more at home in Canada, said Borofsky.

"It's important, having a feeling of belonging and getting to know each other...they feel they are not alone," she said.