

Vermonters bike for disabled Israeli vets

By Jill Diver

Advocate correspondent

GREENSBORO, Vt. — Most American Jews may not know the Friends of Israel Disabled Veterans Bike Ride, but Isaac Seink is working hard to change that.

Seink, now a board member for FIDV and founder of the bike ride, got involved with the organization eight years ago.



He helped to establish a 5K run seven years ago, and then two years ago established the bike ride.

This year's ride is July 31 to Aug. 3, beginning in Greensboro, Vt. Every day, riders will leave the inn where they are staying and return to the same inn that night. One day, the ride will go toward the south of Vermont; one day to the north; and then the west. Every day, Seink promises, the route is going to be different.

"This is the third year of this ride," Seink says. "I created this bike ride because I had some friends who said they couldn't go to Israel and participate in its 10-day ride, and wouldn't it be

great if there was something in the United States locally to support this?"

The New York-based Friends of Israeli Disabled Vets is the only official representative in the U.S. for Israel's Zahal Disabled Veterans Organization. Both groups work to support rehabilitation centers in Israel like the Beit Halochem Center, which is a long-term recreational, social rehabilitation health club specifically geared toward disabled vets.

Whether veterans have lost limbs or suffer from Posttraumatic Stress Disorder, these centers gives vets a place where they can socialize and get support for their disabilities.

See VETS on Page 4



PHOTO: ISAAC SEINK

Riders from last year's Friends of Israel Disabled Veterans Bike Ride

Vets

Continued from Page 1

Israeli rehabilitation centers serve over 50,000 disabled Israeli veterans; so many vets, in fact, that Israel now has more medal winners in the Paralympic Games than in the actual Olympics.

This year's bike ride will have about 20 participants, Seink says. He believes it is the only multi-day, kosher bike ride in Vermont.

New York resident Tammy Bryk, 52, has participated in this event with her husband for the last two years.

"What Isaac arranges for us is first class," she says. "He hires a chef, and rents a house for the chef, and makes the whole

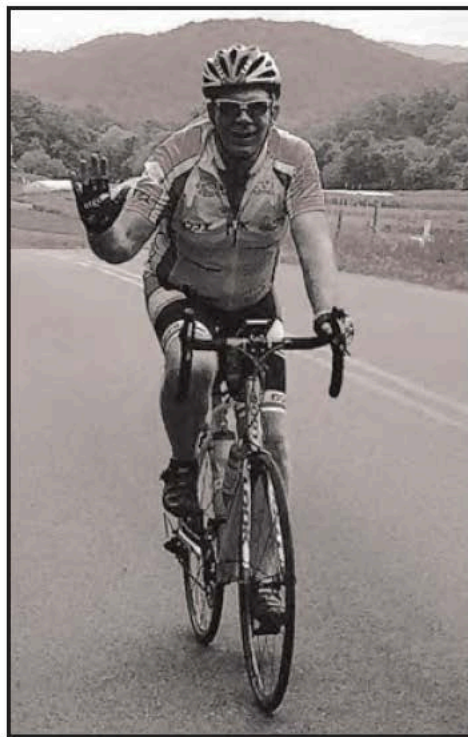


PHOTO: ISAAC SEINK

A rider from last year's Friends of Israel Disabled Veterans Bike Ride

kitchen in the house kosher."

For Bryk, the ride is personal.

"My mom is Israeli. I have

many cousins in Israel who are in the army, and that is their job," she says. "My cousins went to the army and stayed in the army for many, many years."

Bryk said she and her husband train all year for this bike ride, and while the climbing during the bike ride is intense — Vermont has mountains with steep inclines — Bryk says she keeps going because she knows she is biking for someone who lost an arm or a leg, or who has PTSD.

"We do it for the soldiers in Israel," she says. "Sure, they have to do their service, but they're so selfless; the State of Israel is the State of Israel because of these soldiers, that's why we do it, and that's why we ride."

For more information, visit fid-vbikeride.org.