

BIKE FOR SCIENCE IN ARMENIA

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Anahid Yeremian, 9 June 2014

"Bike for Hope for Armenia" cyclists rode in a *Spectacular Armenia Ride* bike-a-thon in support of Yerevan Physics Institute (YerPhI) Cosmic Ray Division (CRD) scientists, May 24 to 30.



Junior Armenian cycling team members supporting the CRD

Riders from the US included Jamie Kolar, Roffi Petrossian, Anahid Yeremian, and from Armenia Rafael Paremuzyan and Mher Mkrtchyan. Kolar is a Los Angeles firefighter medic and Birthright Armenia participant who has founded *Aid to Armenia* and spent a year on sabbatical in Armenia teaching the latest first aid techniques to medics, students, and villagers. Petrossian, from Seattle, is on a year of discovery in Armenia volunteering on environmental projects such as Armenian Tree Planting (ATP), videographing for Civilinet, applying to the AUA program about Armenia's birds of prey. Anahid Yeremian is a particle accelerator physicist at Stanford University and co-founder of the Support Committee for Armenia's Cosmic Ray Division.

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The US riders were joined by Paremuzyan, a physicist at the YerPhI, and by junior riders from the Armenia cycling team, including the two-time world junior silver medalist Mkrtchyan.

Coordinating the 15-plus riders and four support personnel was the ride leader and world renowned master cycling trainer Albert Soloyan.

For seven days the riders braved rain, wind and the hills of the majestic Armenian landscape from Yerevan to Aparan to Ijevan, Dilijan and Lake Sevan. They camped by riversides and groves. They

cooked together, sang together, and danced "shoorch bar" around camp fires.



Some riders at conclusion of bike-a-thon

Mher Mkrтчyаn, two-time world silver medalist in blue, middle

The Armenian Roadway Police escorted the riders through the congested streets of Yerevan on the first day and back to Republic Square on the last day, delivering the tired riders safely to the finish line. Among those welcoming the cyclists were YerPhl scientists, staff, and Prof. Ashot Chilingarian, head of the CRD and director of the Yerevan Physics Institute, together with friends and reporters.

At the conclusion of the *Spectacular Armenia Ride* the cyclists joined the CRD staff and supporters at CRD's Nor Amberd Research Station on Mt. Aragats for a celebration dinner and a tour of the facility. A number of the younger members of the cycling team said they were inspired to do well in their science classes and maybe one day become scientists themselves. In their turn the scientists were inspired to exercise more and said more of them might join the ride next year. Prof. Chilingarian said that he has added bicycle parking stalls at the Yerevan Physics Institute to encourage scientists to bike to work.

The celebration dinner included a recognition of the decades of service by two of Armenia's inspiring leaders in their respective fields: Albert Soloyan who has trained many cycling world champions in Armenia and abroad and brought a breath of fresh air to Armenia's cycling tradition after the independence; and Prof. Chilingarian who has brought life back to the Yerevan Physics Institute and its CRD by encouraging and supporting Armenian youth to claim their scientific passion in Armenia.

