



GREEN ROAD WARRIORS

HOW GIRL SCOUTS ON THE NAVAJO NATION ARE TACKLING TRASH

BY ANNEISE KRAFFT

Girl Scouts Troop 7314 with the Arizona Cactus-Pine Council is growing a generation of young people who care about cleaning up their community, thanks to a special cycling challenge the troop undertook this July.

“Our troop participated in a 200-mile, eight-day community bike ride called the Tour de Sih Hasin,” says Troop Leader Claudia Jackson. “I’ve always been passionate about cycling and am so happy to be able to share it with the girls.”

The Tour de Sih Hasin, which Jackson herself founded in 2012, was started with the purpose of bringing awareness to mental health struggles that Jackson witnessed within the Navajo community, including suicide and substance abuse.

“Mental health challenges are common on our reservation and I noticed our community was missing a healthy outlet,” says Jackson. “I wanted to help fill that need, and empower young women through cycling the same way it empowered me.”

Starting with only six people, the tour has successfully grown into an annual event—now celebrating its seventh year. With the help of the Girl Scouts–Arizona Cactus-Pine Council,

Jackson was able to start a cycling-focused troop of 37 girls with one goal in mind: taking on the 200-mile bike ride.

To prepare for their journey, the girls, ranging in age from 6 to 15, met every Friday for bike practice, which they called “Friday Girl Rides.” Although the preparation took a physical and mental toll, one challenge they did not expect to find was trash littering the scenic landscape.

“This experience gives the girls a great opportunity to see the beauty of the Navajo Nation,” says Jackson. “We were surprised at the amount of trash we found along the way, but it only inspired the girls to take initiative and do something about it.”

Channeling the Girl Scout mission of developing courage, confidence and character, the girls decided to face the problem head-on for their Take Action Project, which helps Girl Scouts find a sustainable solution to a problem they notice in their community. To help tame trash, the troop developed “mess kits” as a way to collect litter during their rides.

Along with the mess kits, Jackson and her troop also created plate washing stations to be carried in the cars that follow the

Tour de Sih Hasin participants throughout the eight-day ride.

“It can be hard to use reusable products during the tour,” says Jackson. “We go through a lot of paper plates and plastic utensils during the ride, and the girls were inspired to make a change.”

Most of all, in their eco-conscious quest, the girls wanted to find a way to maintain the stunning scenery of the Navajo Nation. What better way than with a stunning art piece? As they collected trash along their rides, the girls gathered bottle caps to contribute to a mural reminding residents to “keep our land beautiful.”

To learn more about Girl Scouts–Arizona Cactus-Pine Council, how to join or become a volunteer, visit www.girlscoutsaz.org.

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Annelise Krafft is an account coordinator with HMA Public Relations, which represents Girl Scouts–Arizona Cactus-Pine Council.

Opposite page: Girl Scouts Troop 7314 poses together with Troop Leader Claudia Jackson (middle, in white).

Right: Karen Begay (right) gives her niece Mariah Antonio (left) support during the challenging bike ride, which requires adult participation for riders under 18.

Below: Girl Scouts Troop 7314 gears up for a 200-mile, eight-day bike ride across the Navajo Nation.

All photos courtesy of Girl Scout Troop 7314.

