



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

April 22, 2016

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## **It's a fresh new feel for Tour de Bloom at Apple Blossom**

### **Riders to race in Leavenworth; juniors race for free; equal payouts to men, women**

WENATCHEE — Tour de Bloom will unveil a decidedly new look the first full weekend in May.

Not only is the longtime Wenatchee Valley Velo Club cycling event adding a Stage Race to its lineup, but the first stage will be held in Leavenworth on May 6, with the start and finish in the Bavarian Village and pro riders heading up and down a closed-off lane on Highway 2 in Tumwater Canyon. The others stages will take place May 7 and 8 on Mission Ridge Road, downtown Wenatchee streets and Waterville Plateau roads.

"We are putting Tour de Bloom and the Wenatchee Valley on the national cycling map," said race director Ace Bollinger. "There is a lot of buzz right now about the Velo Club starting and finishing the 64-mile Sleeping Lady Leavenworth Stage Race in the Bavarian Village. Riders are really pumped about having access to Tumwater Canyon. With the Cascades towering above and the Wenatchee River rushing by, it is going to be truly spectacular."

While the Stage Race for pro riders is garnering plenty of attention, the bulk of participants will be entered in the traditional Tour de Bloom Omnium for amateurs. The Omnium begins with the Mission Ridge Hill Climb on Saturday morning, May 7, continues with the Biosports Downtown Wenatchee Criterium that Saturday afternoon and evening, and concludes with the Western Materials Waterville Road Race on Sunday morning, May 8.

As it has for several years now, Tour de Bloom falls on the final weekend of the Apple Blossom Festival.

"Last year, we had about 350 riders at the Omnium and they told us they were impressed with the scenery, the race organization and all the spectators packed along the downtown criterium course," Bollinger said.

There are other 'firsts' at this year's event as well. For the first time, Tour de Bloom is offering free entries to all junior Omnium participants. And the payouts to the pro men and women categories will now be the same, with \$1,000 in cash going to the top pro male and pro female riders each.

Bollinger said having Tour de Bloom during Apple Blossom Festival has been attractive to riders and to the family members and friends who accompany them.

The Apple Blossom Festival Grand Parade is held the morning and early afternoon of May 7. Once it ends, the Downtown Criterium begins. Tour de Beer, a series of craft beer gardens along the Downtown Criterium course, will be held that day as well. This festive scene proved to be a hit last year for spectators and brought a lot of energy to what organizers dub, "The Fastest Crit in the West."

"We see it as an outstanding way to cap the two-week run of the Apple Blossom Festival and to bring people downtown in the late afternoon and evening hours," Bollinger said.

The host lodging establishments for Tour de Bloom are the Coast Center Hotel in downtown Wenatchee and Sleeping Lady Mountain Resort in Leavenworth. There also is free camping available for participants at Squilchuck State Park near Wenatchee and the North Central Washington Fairgrounds at Waterville. CrosSport Performance, 501 S. Wenatchee Ave., is offering free hostel housing on Friday and Saturday.

A price increase for Tour de Bloom is coming up on May 1. Online registration for the Tour de Bloom Stage Race can be found at <https://www.usacycling.org/register/2016-824>. Online registration for the Tour de Bloom Omnium can be found at <https://www.usacycling.org/register/2016-630>.

For more on Tour de Bloom, including course maps, please visit <http://www.wenatcheevalleyvelo.com>.

Funds raised from Tour de Bloom go toward kids biking safety programs (including 500 bike helmets given free to kids at Apple Blossom), a sustainable trails network in the Wenatchee Valley, and bicycle advocacy programs and outreach.

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