

Wheeling Wild – An Outdoor Adventure for the Whole Family

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The Sedgwick County Zoo closes at 5 p.m. As the evening cools, the guests go home, the keepers get the animals ready for bed, and the Zoo empties out.

But twice a month from 6-7 p.m., you can experience a truly unique outdoor evening activity. You can experience the Zoo in a way you probably haven't before- as a bike trail.

"We used to do Wheeling Wild just once a month, and they were filling up fairly regularly. So, we expanded it to a second day," Education Specialist Joe McDowell said. "It's the fourth Tuesday and second Saturday of the month."

Wheeling Wild takes a group of up to 20 riders on a bike trail around the Zoo. The event has bikers of all ages and experience levels. It's a great opportunity for family biking.

"It's just biking in a unique location," McDowell said. "It's for those that want to take their family to the Zoo and experience it in a different way."

Every Wheeling Wild has a different topic that it focuses on. This provides a stopping point for riders where they can catch their breath, drink some water, and learn about the animals that call the Sedgwick County Zoo home.

Program Educator Catherine Calderwood has been leading Wheeling Wilds for nearly a decade.

"It's another unique way to see and interact with the Zoo," Calderwood said. "It's a great way to get some exercise, but also just to see things at a new time of day in a new way."



But it's not just habitats that you can bike by, Wheeling Wild occasionally offers a look behind the scenes.

"I think people getting to see things they don't normally get to see is exciting," Schanee Anderson, Curator of Education and Farms, said. "But even being here at night and on the bikes creates a whole different experience."

Calderwood said that the animals all react differently to the bikes. The giraffes seem especially keen on watching the bikers ride by.

"Everything every time is a little bit different, especially with all the changes we've been making around the Zoo," said Calderwood. "The giraffes are always really interesting because sometimes they'll follow along the edge and watch us."

With your seat in the saddle and your feet on the pedals, you're ready to ride this bike trail.

Wheeling Wild is an outdoor evening activity you can enjoy from April through September, weather permitting. McDowell recommends people arrive around 5:45pm so they have time to get their bikes ready to ride. That way the group can hit the trail right at 6pm.

The event is sponsored by Bicycle X-Change, a local cycling shop that's been servicing bicycles in Wichita for fifty years. They provide maintenance on the Zoo's bikes so that they can remain in tip-top shape.

One of McDowell's favorite things about this family biking event is that it allows families to get active and appreciate the natural world together.

"Most households have bikes that don't leave the garage. This is an encouragement to get people out and active and enjoying nature," Anderson said. "Being outdoors becomes part of their family adventure."

And if you were wondering, Wheeling Wild is B.Y.O.B.- bring your own bike!