



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Contacts:

LHF President, Jess Murphy, 973-663-2500

jess@lakehopatcongfoundation.org

Photos Available

Lake Loop Brings State Park to Life

LAKE HOPATCONG, N.J. (October 11, 2018) — By October, summer's roar of activity at Hopatcong State Park has faded to little more than the whisper of windswept leaves scraping along pavement. Some days, however, are exceptions.

The sixth annual Lake Loop, held Sunday, Oct. 7 at the park, pulled in several hundred visitors. Cars crammed the parking lot, music filled the air, and everywhere you turned it seemed like summer had made a surprising comeback.

The event, a fundraiser hosted by the Lake Hopatcong Foundation, offers guests a trio of activities—biking, running and paddling—giving them a chance to relive the days before winter's chilly breath could be felt on the back of their necks.

"We were a little startled by the unexpectedly wet weather in the morning, which was at odds with the forecast," said LHF Executive Director Jessica Murphy. "But once things really got going and the sun began to shine, we all had a collective sigh of relief that it would be another beautiful day for our participants."

Before sunrise at the park, under a heavy, damp blanket of clouds, LHF staff and dozens of volunteers wielded flashlights as they set up tents, tables and chairs for the 7 a.m. start. By the end of the day, nearly 250 participants had pedaled, paddled or paced their way through at least one of the courses.

Nearly 150 cyclists circled Lake Hopatcong on any of three routes, rolling along 62, 40 or 20 miles of scenic hillsides. About 70 runners tackled either a five-kilometer or 1.5-mile

course of wooded trails, beach and paved paths. Seventy-five other guests used kayaks, canoes and paddleboards to cover a 2.5-mile loop on the lake.

“Mayors from the four lake communities were on-hand and we had an amazing variety of local food and music,” said Becky Rubenstein, a volunteer who organizes Lake Loop. “Two of the musicians actually rode the bike challenge before playing, which was very cool, and we always have great support from local public safety personnel.”

Frank Malpica, a first-timer at Lake Loop, tackled the 20-mile bike while his family enjoyed food and music at the park.

“It was a fantastic event, and I’d definitely do it again,” said the 40-year-old Roxbury resident, as the skies began to clear by mid-morning. “It’s run by great people for a good cause, all while having a lot of fun. The lake is a special landmark for this area.”

It was also Maria Romano’s first time on the 20-mile ride. The 64-year-old grew up in Hopatcong, moved to New York City for 34 years, but returned to live in her hometown.

“It’s hard to leave the lake,” said Romano. “I was so excited that I did the ride. Nobody was with me, but I met some nice people along the way. It wasn’t easy with some of those hills, but it was a great route. I’d absolutely do it again next year.”

Her enthusiasm was echoed by Merrill Eppedio, who did the paddle with her husband, Mark, and sons Andrew, 15, and Brayden, 12. They were also new to the Lake Loop experience and temperatures were in the mid-70s when they were on the water.

“It was phenomenal,” said the 45-year-old Landing resident, standing on the beach after her paddle, as her husband made his way toward shore. “It was a gorgeous day to get out on the lake and enjoy this wonderful resource with my family. I had so much fun and I’d definitely do it again.”

There were several participants who were determined to do all three activities. Friends Jeison Marroquin, of Wharton, and Edwin Zapata, of Dover, started with the 40-mile bike ride before moving on to the trail run and paddle.

“I’m a cyclist, so I ride all the time, and the route was beautiful,” said the 35-year-old Marroquin. “I’ve always wanted to do a triathlon, so I liked the experience of doing all three events. It was hard, but I definitely enjoyed it.”

While the activities aren’t intended to be competitive, it’s safe to say Lake Hopatcong was a clear winner. The Lake Loop raises money to support the Lake Hopatcong Foundation, whose projects and initiatives are designed to support the lake environment and to enhance the experience of those who use it.

“As always, Lake Loop was an event full of energy because of the limitless enthusiasm of the people who were there,” said Murphy. “Volunteers, participants, vendors and spectators all brought so much electricity to the day and made it the fun experience it was.

“Becky [Rubenstein] does such a fantastic job and although it’s a fun day, in and of itself, the real purpose is to benefit our beautiful lake. The event certainly achieved that this year.”

* * *

The Lake Hopatcong Foundation is a registered 501(c)(3) nonprofit dedicated to protecting the lake environment and enhancing the lake experience by bringing together public and private resources to encourage a culture of sustainability and stewardship on and around New Jersey’s largest lake, for this and future generations. To learn more, visit lakehopatcongfoundation.org.

-30-



Roxbury Mayor Mark Crowley, Hopatcong Mayor Michael Francis, Lake Hopatcong Foundation President Jess Murphy, Jefferson Mayor Russell Felter, and Mt. Arlington Mayor Michael Stanzilis pause for a picture in front of Lake Hopatcong before venturing along the trail for the Mayor’s walk at Lake Loop 2018. Photo by Bob Kays



Maria Romano takes a break at a rest stop along the 20-mile Lake Loop bike route.
Photo by Bill Woolley



The Eppedio's made Lake Loop 2018 a family affair. (left to right) Andrew, Mark, Merrill and Brayden finish up their paddle on Lake Hopatcong. Photo by Bill Woolley



Jeison Marroquin and Edwin Zapata complete the paddle portion of Lake Loop 2018, their final event after completing the 40-mile bike route and the 5k trail run. Photo by Bill Woolley
