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Contact: Peter Zilliox  
Tel. 816.820.3374  
Email: info@smackdab281.org  
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## **Fourth Annual Smackdab Summer Solstice Run Expected To Be Largest Yet**

LEBANON, KS — Saturday, June 23, 2018 will mark the fourth annual Smackdab Summer Solstice Run, a one-day, 675-mile motorcycle tour held between dawn and dusk on the Saturday closest to the summer solstice. The ride starts between dawn and sunrise at the monument marking the Geographic Center of the 48 Contiguous States, just outside Lebanon, Kansas. Riders head north toward a similar monument marking the Geographic Center of North America in Rugby, North Dakota, and must arrive by dusk. The event is not a group ride. Participants ride individually, travel at their own pace, and stop whenever and wherever they like. There is no registration fee; the only expense is the optional purchase of an embroidered patch, which is offered to verified finishers at cost.

The Smackdab Summer Solstice Run is the brainchild of Peter Zilliox, a motorcyclist from Kansas City. “It’s a very grass-roots, unstructured thing,” Zilliox said. “I originally conceived of the trip as something to do with my wife and a riding buddy of ours. The three of us had previously explored a lot of rural Kansas by motorcycle, and I was looking for a new adventure. But it was a quirky enough idea that I posted an invitation on an online riders’ forum, and a dozen others joined us for that first run in 2015. So, I had some finisher’s patches made up for everyone. Several prospective riders who couldn’t make the inaugural trip expressed an interest in continuing it as an annual event. The next year, a totally new crop of riders completed the trip, and then participation really skyrocketed in 2017.”

A total of 87 riders—eighty motorcyclists plus seven co-riders—completed the most recent Smackdab Summer Solstice Run last June. This year, participation is expected to be even greater. “Most of our growth has been through word-of-mouth and social media,” Zilliox said. “I’m amazed how many people have expressed interest in this year’s event. Online registration went live on January 10th, and less than a month later we already have more than 30 riders signed up.”

The ride starts twelve miles south of the Kansas–Nebraska border, just off US Highway 281. The solstice allows over sixteen hours to ride the 675 miles across Nebraska and South Dakota, then through most of North Dakota. The route follows Highway 281 north for 95 percent of the trip, until it turns west on US Highway 2 for the final 34 miles into Rugby, North Dakota, which is within 50 miles of the Canadian border. Just before dusk, finishers gather at the monument in Rugby to swap stories of the road and share a great sense of accomplishment.

“All types of bikes make the ride, even as small as 250 cc’s,” Zilliox said. “From Harley dressers to adventure bikes to trikes—any motorcyclist is welcome to show up and ride. It’s just an excuse to spend a day exploring some new territory on a bike, meet other bikers, and have a bit of adventure.”

For more information and photos, or to register, visit the Smackdab website at <http://smackdab281.org>

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