

## **Texans Host Nation's First Annual Lyme Ryde, Lyme Awareness Bicycle Challenge**

By Harriet L. Bishop, President, Texas Lyme Disease Association

Over 250 Texans celebrated the Nation's First Annual Lyme Awareness Bicycle Ride, Lyme Ryde and Fat Tire Festival, which was hosted in Texas November 3, 2007 by the Greater Houston Off-Road Biking Association. The rollicking family event was arranged by Brian Thigpen, Event Organizer for [GHORBA.org](http://GHORBA.org) and his wife, Tammy. The Rocky Hill Bike Ranch, unofficial 'home' to mountain biking organizations all around Smithville, Texas, just east of Austin, was alive with Lyme Green Tick Piñatas, Lyme green T-shirts, and the colorful biking apparel and helmets of the eager entrants. A skills clinic and bike maintenance clinic provided activities for all ages and levels of bicycle skills. Catered meals, free snacks, kegs donated by New Belgium Brewery and continuous music added to the day-long festivities which concluded with a huge bonfire to burn the remains of the infamous giant Lyme Green Tick Piñatas, which had long since disgorged their candy contents to the happy children scrambling on the grass.

The tough course was set in mountainous terrain in the piney woods adjacent to Bastrop and Buescher State Parks with alert judges at each skills test and additional challenges to earn points at the Start/Finish area. A unique feature was the Giant Tick Toss—how far can you throw a heavy metal "tick" made on location from an old bike wheel and eight spindly "legs" made of cut-up rubber tires? Bikers again had to hop off their bikes to shoot Lyme green paintballs at a tick target set up on hay bales 75 feet away, and remount to endure the Lumberjack Challenges, One-legged Race, and Bunny Hop over stacks of logs. Crashes were frequent, but spirits stayed high as the entrants enjoyed the fun of the competition along with Bicycle Frisbee.

New Revolution Cycles in Kyle, TX donated prizes and a brand new \$700.00 mountain bicycle to be raffled. A set of \$250.00 bicycle lights for night riding was donated by Bicycle World & Fitness. Bicycle Sport Shop in Austin, Cyclone Cycles, Bike Sport, and West End Bicycles also donated prizes such as helmets, T-shirts, biking apparel and bicycle tire pumps. Houston's hockey team, the Houston Aeros donated a surprise -- \$1000 worth of hockey tickets presented to all the delighted volunteers. Those lucky folks who helped make the nation's First Annual Lyme Ryde a success will gather again at the Aeros hockey game December 22, 2007, wearing Lyme green and raising awareness in the stands!

Proceeds from the event will be donated to [Texas Lyme Disease Association](http://TexasLymeDiseaseAssociation.org) and [Stand Up For Lyme](http://StandUpForLyme.org). Plans are underway for an even better follow-up event next year.