



**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
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COUNTY OFFICIAL WILL BIKE TO WORK IN HONOR OF TOURISM WEEK & BIKE TO WORK DAY



NEW PORT RICHEY, FL – Eric Keaton, the **Public Communications Manager** for Pasco County, will ride his bicycle to work on **Friday, May 16**, in recognition of **National Tourism Week** and **National Bike to Work Day**.

Keaton will ride 25 miles from his home in Pinellas County to the West Pasco Government Center on Little Road in New Port Richey.

In addition to his role as a county spokesperson, Keaton oversees the Office of Tourism. He said the ride is his way of recognizing the importance of cycling and other sporting activities as part of the county's efforts to market itself as a tourist/sports destination. He also hopes to bring attention to the Greenways, Trails and Blueways connections from Pinellas to Pasco County.

The county currently hosts more than half a dozen cycling events throughout the year, including "family fun" rides such as the Ride for Humanity in Dade City and competitive, nationally sanctioned triathlons at Longleaf and Saint Leo University.

"I've always wanted to participate in something like this and with it being National Tourism Week and Bike to Work Day, it seemed like the perfect opportunity to promote the county and the trails initiative," Keaton said.

This year, **National Bike to Work Day** on **May 16** coincides with **National Tourism Week**, which is **May 10 – 18**. The theme for Tourism Week is "**Discover Great American Traditions**." Keaton said he would like to see cycling and other sporting events become a tradition in Pasco County.

"The county is well-known for our eco-tourism and historic destinations," Keaton said. "With our recent emphasis on sporting events, we are hoping to capture a good part of that tourism market as well."

Keaton noted that recent collections of the county's tourist development or "bed tax" indicate that efforts to promote sports and other tourist activity in Pasco are working. Pasco recently posted its best month and best quarter since the tax collection began in 1990-91. Revenue from the tax is used to promote the county through advertising, capital improvements and special events.

About \$75,000 a year is allocated to **Special Event Grants**, which are distributed to area chambers of commerce and other non-profit groups. This year, the **Grant Application Process** will begin on **May 20** and conclude **July 31**.

Two grant-funded events coincide with Tourism Week in Pasco. The week kicks off with the **Cotee River Seafood Festival & Boat Show**, May 9 to 11 in downtown New Port Richey. The week concludes with the **2008 Southern Regional Speed Skating Championships** at Spinnations Skating Center in Port Richey on May 17 and 18.

For more information on National Tourism Week, visit the county's website at www.visitpasco.net. For more on National Bike to Work Day, visit www.tampabaycycle.com.

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