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Keep pedaling: Pedal Past Poverty earns \$75K in 7th year

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Ginny Scheurer pedals as part of the Mayo Clinic North Ridge team Saturday at the seventh annual Pedal Past Poverty fundraiser. Organizers estimate the event drew \$75,000 towards housing for homeless and low-income resides in the area.

Photo by Trey Mewes

MANKATO — Stationary bikes can do wonders for a workout, and a mass gathering of people Saturday did wonders for an area nonprofit looking to prevent homelessness in south-central Minnesota.

More than 400 people came to ride, fan, cheer and raise money at the seventh annual Pedal Past Poverty event at the Mankato YMCA Saturday morning. About 30 teams with 10 riders each competed, while the event raised more than \$75,000 for nonprofit Partners for Affordable Housing.

"It's really impactful, not just to bring people together but also to support our organization and the work that we're doing," said Jen Theneman, executive director of Partners for Affordable Housing.

The annual event is the biggest fundraiser of the year for the group, which offers shelter for homeless residents and families and helps connect them with housing opportunities. Teams try to raise at least \$1,000 to participate, which riders say becomes easier with each passing year.

That's in part because the area realizes there's a need for services for low income families and residents.

"They are needing some assistance from the community," said Vanessa Mahoney.

Mahoney rode as part of the Welcome Manor Family Services, a fellow nonprofit that works with Partners for Affordable Housing. It's Mahoney's fifth year participating in Pedal Past Poverty, and it's personal for her. She interned at Partners for Affordable Housing and works with women to find housing as part of Welcome Manor.

"Sometimes we have clients who go to their facility after ours, and so it's really important to keep that support to our partner agencies," she said.

Despite the serious goal, there are plenty of teams who have fun with the competition. Some riders get dressed in costumes of all kinds, which looks like it can really tire out participants who have to pedal in 20-minute heats.

"I wouldn't want to wear one biking," North Mankato Finance Director Kevin McCann said. "It doesn't look that hot, but once you get started it gets hot really quick."

McCann joined North Mankato officials and staff in their own team as part of the fundraiser Saturday. McCann also joined the hundreds of people gathered inside the YMCA in giving time and money toward addressing homelessness.

Megan Poehler of United Prairie Bank said that's one of the reasons why employees have participated for the past four years. The bank also collects money for housing nonprofits by paying to wear jeans on Friday, among other fundraising efforts.

"We're passionate about this cause," Poehler said.