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Public can ride same course as Amgen Tour of California professionals in Sutter Health Sacramento Community Ride

The Sutter Health Sacramento Community Ride will give cyclists of all ages an opportunity to experience the same course that superstars Lance Armstrong and Levi Leipheimer will speed across two hours later in the Amgen Tour of California.

The Sutter Health Sacramento Community Ride begins at 11:30 a.m. on Saturday, Feb. 14. Sacramento Mayor Kevin Johnson and other dignitaries will lead the public on a single circuit of the 2.4-mile prologue course. The Amgen Tour of California prologue begins at 1:30 p.m.

The Sutter Health Sacramento Community Ride is open to the public and free of charge. There is no registration – just show up with a bike at about 11 a.m. near the starting line at the corner of Capitol Mall and Ninth Street. The community ride is just that – a family ride, not a race.

Since virtually all of the participants in the Community Ride will be sticking around to watch the professional race that afternoon, there will be free bicycle valet parking for a limited number of bikes on the west side (facing 10th Street) of the state Capitol.

“I can’t think of a better way to kick off what’s sure to be an unforgettable day in downtown Sacramento,” said Sacramento Mayor Kevin Johnson. “I’m excited to be joining the public in the Sutter Health Sacramento Community Ride. We won’t break any speed records, but we’ll get a feel for what the world’s best cyclists will experience a couple of hours later. It should be a great community event.”

“Sutter Health is proud to help welcome the Amgen Tour to the greater Sacramento area, where we have a long history of promoting health, providing advanced care, and helping families get back to life,” said Sutter Health President and CEO Patrick Fry.

The nine-day 2009 Amgen Tour of California will feature 17 of the world’s top professional teams. Armstrong, the seven-time Tour de France champion, is racing for Astana, as is Leipheimer, the two-time defending Amgen Tour of California winner. The Sacramento Police Department is expecting a crowd of 75,000 on Valentine’s Day for the start of the world-renowned race.

For two and a half hours, at speeds approaching 30 mph, the field of more than 150 cyclists will race the 2.4-mile course, each rider setting off at one-minute intervals. The cyclist with the fastest prologue time will receive the Amgen Leader Jersey entering the first road stage on Feb. 15 from Davis to Santa Rosa.

For more information on the Amgen Tour of California and the Sutter Health Sacramento Community Ride, visit www.sacsports.com or call (916) 808-2400.

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