

## 'Take the Lake' offers...

# D'eja "view"

over and over again!



### Four groups paddle, walk, bicycle and swim Lake Waccamaw over Labor Day weekend

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Chief Photographer

During the prayer before swimmers take to the water to attempt an achievement few believe possible – a four-mile swim across Lake Waccamaw – Julie Stocks quotes Lee J. Greer, the founder of the decades-old event, noting that Greer believed that to accept such a challenge makes a person “an achiever and believer, not a deceiver.”

Greer may have also described all participants of the newly expanded four-day event, which also includes walking, bicycling and paddling around the lake. (Organizers may call the proposed annual event “Take the Lake.”) On Friday afternoon, three kayakers set off from the Wildlife boat ramp, two of them with the goal of paddling around the lake – they made it about five hours later.

On Saturday, 37 walkers left the state park visitors center to trek the 17 miles around the lake, and 32 returned on foot, between about two and six hours later.

On Sunday, 26 adults and children left the boat ramp to bicycle around the lake, pushing their bikes three miles along the park’s trails. Most finished, between about two and five hours later.

On Monday, nine swimmers left the beach near Dale’s Seafood, with eight finishing unassisted between two-and-a-half hours and about five hours later.

It is emphasized in all events that they are not races, but sometimes individuals’ times are recorded to help them achieve their personal best times. Also, the events are organized in four days so anyone can participate in more than one event. They are designed to be formidable, yet achievable, challenges for the average person.

One of the two new events, the paddle offered participants a beautiful view of the lake, displaying the entire shore in four panoramas. The weather was perfect, with a thunderstorm in the north as the paddlers head south from the boat ramp. The water was choppy down to the park, where it was glass-smooth. A stop on the park beach presented a vista reminiscent of a tropical island. On the ride north along the east shore, following seas boosted the paddlers’ speeds, and a beautiful sunset graced the ride along the north shore.

The final hour back to the boat ramp was in complete, new-moon, darkness. Traveling by the lights of the homes on

glass-smooth water, the paddlers enjoyed an exotic, surreal experience. The lights from the football game at East Columbus High School lit up one side of the lake, while the state park, completely dark, rose up out of the surrounding lights and mist for a dramatic scene.

The walkers and cyclists enjoyed views of the lake not available to motorists as they slowly passed by canals and waterways. Walking along the newly-improved trails of the park allowed for stops at white-sand beaches while gazing at beautiful stands of trees and wildlife, including families of butterflies.

One group of walkers realized the magnitude of their achievement when, late in their walk, resting on a pier at the park, they looked out across the great expanse of water and said “we were there. Just a few hours ago, we were way over there, and we brought ourselves several miles to this place with our own two feet.” It was a quick rush that propelled them along the balance of their journey.

The bicycle ride was the quickest event and offered participants a unique decathlon challenge. In the middle of the 17-mile trek, the cyclists walked their bikes between the dam and the state park swimming pier. Teamwork made transport over the dam simple.

Elusive as to its date of origin, the Labor Day lake swim is the oldest organized, non-scholastic athletic event in the county. Perpetuated by the family of Greer and others, it has given hundreds of people the opportunity to set goals toward an impressive achievement and, with some training and much determination, to meet those goals. It has also inspired first the walk, which was organized by Grant Egley in 2003, and the newest challenges with pedals and paddles.

Deception easily creeps into our lives, letting sore muscles and bones deceive us into believing that we are incapable of achievements. With its hurried pace and modern transportation, society deceives us into thinking we cannot walk, bicycle, paddle or swim more than is absolutely necessary. But deception’s enemy is belief.

Achievement is, by and large, impossible without first belief. It is what drove a man named Lee J. Greer to achieve, and to help and inspire hundreds of others to achieve things they once could not believe possible.

Left column from top, Janine Sellers of Whiteville before the swim across the lake. Brett Gore, left, and Steven Gilchrist of Swansboro lead a cycling group along the park trails. The prayer before the swim, with, in foreground, Samantha Lane and Andrew Powell, both 10, who finished for their first times, and Russell Smith, top, who cycled, swam, walked and kayaked a total of 32 miles Monday. Stopping to watch an alligator along Bella Coola Road during the bicycle ride. Hannah Norris wasn’t prepared for the walk, but she took it in stride, walking in socks along the park trails with her mother, Lisa Norris.



The coveted gold medal, donated each year by Collier’s Jewelers, is given to swimmers who complete the Labor Day Swim unassisted.

Organizer contacts and other information can be found at [www.Takethelake.blogspot.com](http://www.Takethelake.blogspot.com)



From top, Lynne Hewett, left, helps Brett Gore and Greg Hewett, right, bring a bicycle with a child’s seat and large cooler across the dam on the mouth of the Waccamaw River. Walter Palmer, who completed the paddle, bicycle and swim events this weekend, and Dawn McMillan of Ocean Isle, paddle along the state park shoreline. One of the bicycle groups had a golf-cart escort to help tired cyclists and to increase the fun factor.

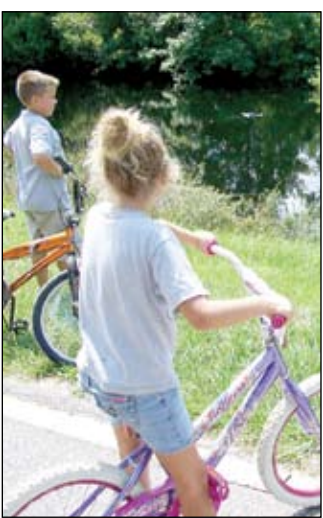
#### THE EVENTS

**Paddle (Friday)**  
14 miles around lake, inside the posted no-wake zone

**Walk (Saturday)**  
17 miles around lake, including park trails.

**Bicycle (Sunday)**  
17 miles around lake, including park trails.

**Swim (Monday)**  
4 miles across lake, between dam and north shore.



From left, Sheila Long takes an impromptu break on a Waccamaw Shores front lawn. Ronna Gore adjusts her son, Will Gore’s, helmet, and Johnny McNeill and Robert Eplee, who have helped organize the Labor Day swim for decades, discuss the weather and direction of the swim.