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## St. Lucia Day greets cyclists with treats

by Jennifer Willis, special to The Oregonian

Thursday December 11, 2008, 3:00 AM

If you spot a guy in a white dress with candles on his head on the Steel Bridge offering coffee and doughnuts to passing bicycle commuters, it must be St. Lucia Day.

Celebrated in Scandinavian countries, St. Lucia was a Christian martyr of the early fourth century in Italy. She wore a crown of candles to light her way when carrying food to other persecuted Christians hiding in the catacombs. Dec. 13 is her feast day.

Timo Forsberg started the St. Lucia Breakfast on the Bridge tradition five years ago. Wearing a dress from Goodwill and a battery-powered candle crown, he will be on the west side of the Steel Bridge on Friday morning greeting bike commuters with hot coffee and traditional songs. Start time is about 7:30 a.m.

"It seems like it's right in line with the Lucia ethos of bringing a little bit of light in the dark time of year, bringing a little comfort to the afflicted," says Forsberg.

Organized by volunteers from [SHIFT](#), an informal group of bike fun advocates in Portland, the first Breakfast on the Bridge was in summer 2002. The next January, BonB became a monthly event held every last Friday, except for November and December.

Forsberg, who does education and outreach for the Portland Office of Transportation, says that the last Friday in November is usually the day after Thanksgiving, when there are few bike commuters and people are sleepy and already full. The last Friday of December falls between Christmas and New Year's, another problematic time.

"But St. Lucia Day falls right in the middle of the month," he says. "So I set about serving breakfast."

Forsberg is of Swedish descent but didn't start learning about his heritage until he was a teenager. That's when he discovered St. Lucia

"You don't have to give any presents. You don't have to send cards," he says. "You get to eat pastry and drink coffee and have burning things on your head. It's the perfect holiday."

[BikePortland.org](#) editor Jonathan Maus is a St. Lucia Day regular.

"Breakfast on the Bridge, people really love that tradition anyway," says



Jonathan Maus/special to The Oregonian/2007

Timo Forsberg started the St. Lucia Breakfast on the Bridge tradition five years ago. Wearing a dress from Goodwill and a battery-powered candle crown, he will be on the west side of the Steel Bridge about 7:30 Friday morning, greeting bike commuters with hot coffee and traditional songs.

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