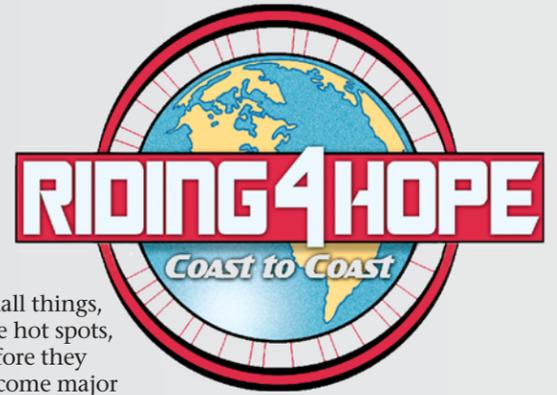


Riding 4 Hope looks forward to an experience of a lifetime



THREE FOR THE ROAD — From left, identical twins John and James and their father David Mackovjak, of Silverdale, Wash., make up the Riding4Hope cycling team. All three will depart June 28 for a 3,900-mile coast-to-coast bicycle ride to raise awareness and funding for the Wounded Warrior Project and in support of Boys & Girls Clubs of America. (Photos courtesy of David Mackovjak)

By Iris Aboytes

Have you ever burned 6,000 calories in a day? David Mackovjak (6432) and his 16-year-old twin sons John and James will be doing just that when they start their cross-country bike ride called Riding4Hope.

The trek begins June 28 in Silverdale, Wash., where David is on assignment for Sandia, and the riders hope to reach Virginia Beach, Va., on Aug. 9. The team includes neighbor Skip Junis, who will be driving their support vehicle.

David and his sons are avid cyclists. Two years ago when they participated in a five-day, 250-mile Boy Scout trip, John and James, both Eagle Scouts, expressed their interest to bike across America. It has taken them a little over a year to put the 3,900-mile trip together.

The purpose of the trip is to raise awareness and money for the Wounded Warrior Project and their local Boys and Girls Club. The goal is to raise \$10,000.

“As a retired naval submarine officer of more than 21 years, I can appreciate firsthand the sacrifices made by the men and women of today’s military-family separations,” says David. “With the Gulf War and the war on terrorism, military families have endured even more hardships. Our cycling team wanted to help these men and women by raising awareness of the Wounded Warrior Project. Additionally, we wanted to sponsor a local charity so we chose the Boys and Girls Club of South Puget Sound.”

The bike ride will cross 10 states in 38 days. The riders will ascend more than 11,500 feet through Hoosier Pass in Colorado. Their goal is to average 104 miles a day. They plan to begin riding each day by 6 a.m. before it gets too hot. John or James will be the navigator on alternate days. They will review and brief the route the night before so that together they can plan the next day’s events.

“We will bike until about 10 or 10:30 a.m. when we will meet Junis and stop for breakfast,” says David. “Then we will bike for another 2 to 2-1/2 hours and stop for lunch, replenish our water, snacks, etc. To keep it fun and break up each day, we will be stopping at points of interest and taking pictures. We plan to ride six to eight hours a day, calling it a day by about 3 p.m. This will give us some time for exploration.”

Their biggest concerns are safety related — keeping well-hydrated during the hot and humid days, eating properly, and biking defensively while sharing the road with vehicles.

Since they will be staying at hotels along the way, they look to the warm showers and swimming pools to help rejuvenate sore neck and leg muscles. “We can’t afford to get blisters or saddle sores,” says David. “There is just not enough recovery time. We need to address

small things, like hot spots, before they become major issues, like blisters.”

In addition to carrying snacks, supplies needed to fix tires, and other trip-related gear, the support vehicle will ensure that if anyone on the team is having an off day or not feeling well, a ride will be available. The team believes in safety first.

Riding4Hope will be offering bike safety workshops at some of the local Boys and Girls Clubs along the way. The boys hope to get some experience in public speaking as they offer encouragement and positive reassurance at the various clubs. They have also included stops at several military installations to talk about the Wounded Warrior Project.

Junis will document the trip through photography — “capturing the American spirit in these challenging times,” he says. He also hopes to raise awareness about the Wounded Warriors Project and Boys and Girls Clubs.

“I hope I will be able to convey that America has a spirit that can overcome anything when we come together,” says Junis. “I am looking forward to the adventure.”

John says he will miss his mother Maria and her home cooking. “I will be in touch with my friends via my camcorder,” he says. “We will record each day. At the end of the trip I hope to have the feeling of accom-



ON THE ROAD AGAIN — The Mackovjak family riders, father and sons, spin through the Washington countryside in a warm-up ride for their marathon cross-country bike trip.

plishment for completing a demanding and challenging event. This will be a perfect bonding experience with my father and brother before we move on to the next chapter in our lives — college.”

“I think all of us being together for this period of time will be OK; we are all pretty close,” says James. “We go on bike rides all the time. We think we will all be about 10 pounds lighter at the end. I’ll look forward to getting off my bike for a while — maybe a long while,” he adds with a smile.

David looks forward to seeing his wife Maria, who will meet them in Virginia Beach at the end of the ride. Her parents live there and the family will visit with them before returning home.

“I will look forward to getting home and thanking all the friends, coworkers, sponsors, and family members who made this event possible,” says David. “I hope to share with them how they helped the lives of our service members and young people of this great country. As they say, it’s not the destination that counts, but the journey, and this will have been quite the journey.”

The Riding4Hope website at www.riding4hope.com will have daily updates.

SANDIA SAFETY SQUAD



MAP showing the 3,900-mile route the Mackovjaks will follow on their cross-country bike ride called Riding4Hope. (Map courtesy of Google Maps)