

Bikers to ride 200-mile journey in support of homeless street kids

By Scott Maben
Of the Emerald

Word has it a pack of bikers will ride into town Saturday.

They will be cruising in on 10-speeds, not choppers, however. And instead of raising havoc, they will attempt to raise public consciousness about Oregon's homeless children.

The "gang" is on a three-day bicycling benefit from Roseburg to Portland with scheduled stops at the University and Oregon State University to pick up additional participants before hitting the road again.

Organizer Paul Tollefson, an art history major at Umpqua Community College in Roseburg, said he hopes this weekend's road trip will stimulate concern for "the four or 500 homeless kids living on the streets of Portland."

'The more people we get, the louder the statement we make.'

—Paul Tollefson

The pledge-by-mile system of fund raising, typical of charity benefits that are based on coverage of distance, won't be used for the tour, he said.

Instead, Tollefson said he expects the effort will be rewarded with private donations from spectators along the way.

Tax-deductible donations will go to the Northwest Foundation for Children, a Portland-based agency devoted to helping the street child. Absolutely every cent collected from the bike ride will help subsidize such programs as the Boys and Girls AIDS Society and Special Olympics, he said.

The nearly 200-mile tour will leave downtown Roseburg at noon today with Tollefson and friends leading the way.

On Sunday the riders will leave the EMU, traveling north through Harrisburg and stopping for the night at Oregon State University's student union.

The third leg will continue Monday. The bikers will steer up through Salem and pass St. Vincent de Paul's Children's Hospital before heading into Portland under police escort. Though not a race, the cyclists

will cross the finish line on the Burnside Bridge, possibly with Portland Mayor Bud Clark joining the pack, Tollefson said.

At age 22, Tollefson has led a one-man publicity crusade preparing for the ride. With his credo, "Lend your legs," Tollefson has solicited interest from local media and participation from area bikers.

He addressed the University's Club Sports cycling team Tuesday night and OSU's cycling club, asking members to hop on the bandwagon in support of fund raising for underprivileged children on the streets.

"The more people we get the louder the statement we make," Tollefson said.

University Cycling Team President Jacqueline Mann said several members of the team have taken interest in Tollefson's project, although she didn't know how many may join the tour.

"We will be out there supporting them," she said.

The conclusion of the tour precedes a Northwest Foundation-sponsored training conference for parents and professionals on ways of dealing with troubled children. Ted Kennedy Jr. will speak Monday night at a children's benefit dinner at the Red Lion Inn in Jantzen Beach before the Tuesday and Wednesday conference begins there.

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