

Annual Texas 4000 riders rolling into Florence

Sixty-seven riders who have raised more than \$485,000 for cancer research, treatment and prevention have begun a 4,000-mile bicycle journey that will include an annual stop in Florence on Friday, July 15, just 42 days after departing from Austin, Texas, bound for Anchorage, Alaska.

While in Florence, the 2016 Texas 4000 Team will celebrate and share hope, knowledge and charity with friends and family, as well as a "Thanksgiving dinner" hosted by members of the St. Andrews Episcopal Church. Riders should roll into

Florence between 3:30 and 4 p.m. on Friday, enjoying their big meal before resting up at more than a dozen homes of church members.

Saturday morning, they'll be treated to breakfast at St. Andrews before continuing on their 70-day journey.

"This is the 10th year our church has hosted them," said Terri Pennington of St. Andrews. "They are current students or recent grads from the University of Texas, and each year is a different group. Their goal is to raise over \$800,000 for cancer research.

"Several have experienced cancer themselves."

The 67 undergraduate and graduate students from UT at Austin are braving the rain, sleet, wind, snow and heat while pedaling more than 4,000 miles in the fight against cancer.

After 18-months of leadership development training, volunteering, fundraising and cycling, riders are put to the test throughout their summer ride to Alaska. Along their journey, they will visit with cancer survivors, patients, caregivers and communities to make educational presentations about cancer prevention and early detection.

They also use this time to offer hope, encouragement and share their personal stories to cancer fighters of all ages and to those who have been affected by the disease.

Every encounter is an inspirational story the riders carry with them on their journey and quest to fight cancer.

Each of this year's riders will take one of three different routes to Alaska (you can view all route maps via the Texas 4000 at www.texas4000.org).

• Sierra Route: These riders

head northwest from Austin and cycle through the Southwest to California, then north along the West Coast and into Canada. Major cities along the route include Albuquerque, N.M.; Davis, Calif.; San Francisco, Calif.; Portland, Ore.; Seattle, Wash.; and Vancouver, B.C.

• Rockies Route: These riders head north from Austin and cut over to the Rocky Mountains. They'll ride through the western U.S. before crossing the Canadian border into Alberta.

Major cities along the route include: Dallas, Texas; Oklahoma City, Okla.; Denver, Colo.; Helena, Mont.; and Calgary, AB.

• Ozarks Route: These riders head east from Austin and cut northeast through the American Midwest before crossing the Canadian border and cycling across four Canadian provinces.

Major cities along the route include: Houston, Texas; St. Louis, Mo.; Chicago, Ill.; Minneapolis, Minn.; Madison, Wis.; Winnipeg, MB; and Edmonton, AB.

In Canada, all three groups will reunite and ride the final 10 days together to Anchorage, Alaska, where the journey has ended since the ride's inception. On each of the three routes, the riders will make stops along the way to present grants to cancer research and treatment centers.

More than 600 students have made the trek from Austin to Alaska, collectively raising more than \$7 million in the fight against cancer since the ride began in 2003.

Most of the students ride for a friend or family member who has battled cancer — and perhaps lost. A few ride in honor of their own battles with cancer, and many simply ride because they want to see an end to cancer, period.

"This is a truly inspiring group of young leaders committed to taking action and joining the fight against cancer," said David Chayer, who was named executive director of Texas 4000 in 2015. "Texas 4000 is a journey that takes grit, determination and support — that's why we think of it as a metaphor for the fight against cancer."

"To me, Texas 4000 is more about the process than the payoff," said Matthew Schneider, a University of Texas at Austin senior and Sierra Route Ride Director. "What we do is not easy. Sometimes we fail, and sometimes that failure is out of our control. Our success is in perseverance, knowing as a team that we are not alone and that our thoughts and actions can be a pillar of support for others."

To learn more about the 2016 Texas 4000 team, to make a donation or to read the riders' blogs, visit www.texas4000.org.

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This year's tournament comes at an important time in the fight to eradicate polio, which would be only the second human disease to be eradicated (after smallpox).

With the continuing effort by Rotary and its worldwide partners, it could happen within a year.

Rotary International has contributed more than \$1.5 billion to ending polio, including more than \$35,000 contributed by the Rotary club of Florence. Funds contributed to Rotary are tripled thanks to a 2:1 match by the Bill and Melinda Gates Foundation.

Rotary and its partners in the polio eradication effort have administered 15 billion doses of vaccine since 2000, immunizing 2.5 billion children.

Immunization campaigns are made more difficult by a

lack of understanding in third world countries, as well as terrorism, civil unrest and government rejection of outside assistance.

And yet Rotary perseveres and the number of cases continues to decline.

So on Saturday, Aug. 6, when 136 players tee off at Ocean Dunes for the seventh annual Cool at the Coast, they are not just playing golf. They are participating in a worldwide initiative that could eliminate polio from the planet by 2017.

Cool at the Coast is presented by Three Rivers Casino Resort and Ocean Dunes Golf Links.

Premier sponsors include Coldwell Banker Coast Real Estate, Oregon Pacific Bank, Peace Harbor Medical Center, ServePro of West Eugene and Florence, and Banner Bank.

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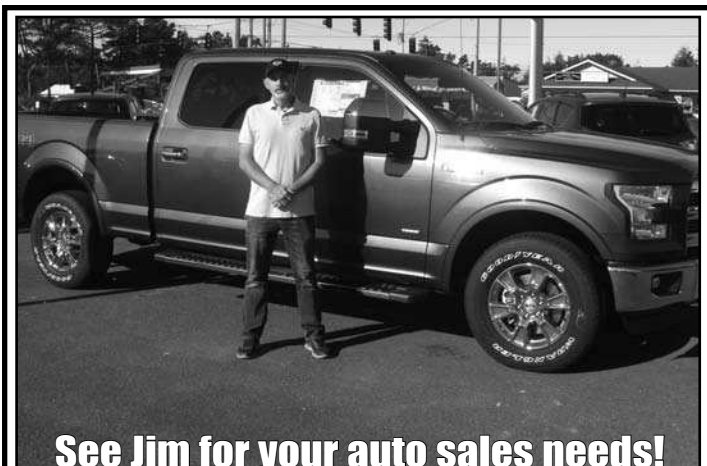


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