



West Coast riders for the Fuller Center Bike Adventure passed through Florence last week on part of their 1,600-mile journey.

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on July 10, all the way down to San Diego, Calif., where they will arrive on Aug. 8. On day six of their tour, July 15, the riders arrived in Florence by way of Newport, and were hosted by the Presbyterian Church on Highway 101 overnight.

“We’ve been supporting the Fuller Center for a couple of years,” said Pastor Greg Wood. “They come through literally every year, and they have another group coming through in August, the Florida-to-Florence group.”

The cross-country ride, which is 10 weeks long, began in Amelia Island, Florida, in May, and ends here in Florence, also on Aug. 8. The West Coast ride by comparison is roughly four weeks long, and riders travel an average of 70 miles per day for a total of 1,600 miles.

“They reached out to us, and just being part of the community, we said, ‘Sure, come and stay,’” said Wood. “Coastal Fitness also let them come in for showers, so it’s not just us, it’s a community experience.”

Communities like Florence are what have helped the Fuller Center Bike Adventure be successful since its beginning.

Gary Schroeder, a rider from California, has been on nine rides so far with the Fuller Center.

“It’s a fundraising bike ride, and it’s a major fundraiser for the Fuller Center,” he said. “Each rider has an amount of donations de-

pending on the length of the ride — not everybody rides the whole way, you can pop in for a week or two weeks, so you’re not required to do the whole thing. And the length of your ride determines the funds that you raise.”

The riders pay a registration fee to cover incidentals, some meals and the gas for the support vehicle.

“The money we raise can all go directly to poverty housing,” said Schroeder.

According to rider Alice Myk of Illinois, who is in her fourth year as a volunteer and rider with the Fuller Center, “Ninety-seven percent of our funds that we raise, our donations we collect, go back into the pool to help the housing.”

“And normally, we build along the way,” continued rider Susan Pratt, who has been on 13 rides with the Fuller Center as a volunteer. “Unfortunately, because of the pandemic, we’re not building, but what I find fascinating is you get riders from all over the country. Some of them have been from Romania and Australia, and we’re strangers the first day we meet, and by the first week, you know everybody.”

“It’s a fantastic opportunity. And because we sleep on the floors at churches, we meet the community as well. This year is not so much because of the pandemic — usually we try to present in front of the community. But at least we’re meeting the pastor, the people, whatever it might be.”

By partnering with churches in the communities they ride through and build for, the Fuller Center riders can put the money they would normally put toward a cross-country trip into donations used to build homes for impoverished families.

“I think of the approximately 20 churches we have on this trip, 16 of them are the same ones that we used previously,” said Schroeder. “And it is really fun, I think they get a lot out of it by being part of the mission as well.”

“Simply opening up their buildings to us to allow us to sleep on their floors and use their facility is a big part of this whole thing,” Myk continued.

Scott Baker of Connecticut, who is on his sixth ride with the Fuller Center said, “It helps their community, and it helps our community.”

The group also noted the generosity of people they meet along the way throughout their trips, with even unhoused people or others who have only change to spare willingly donating to the cause upon hearing what the Fuller Center Bike Adventure funds.

“Three years ago, going across the country, we were climbing over the peaks of one of the passes,” said Myk. “It was a struggle, it was snowing and raining, and we were all cold. Our rest stop was at the top, and when we got up there, somebody had actually gone down and brought coffee

back up to our rest stop for us. We were just so thankful of kind, generous people. Coming from the outskirts of Chicago, sometimes you think everything’s rough and tough, and you realize the hospitality and the love out there is so grand.”

For Schroeder, “I think [other people along the way] like being a part of it the same way the churches do. They feel like if they can help us help somebody, then they’re indirectly helping, and it’s very reassuring to find out that the world isn’t all full of cynics. There are people out there who really care and step up when they don’t have to, and it’s fun being a part of that.”

Indeed, the Fuller Center is an organization who takes caring to the next level.

For more information, visit www.fullercenterbikeadventure.org/.

Editor’s Note: Read more about the Fuller Center Bike Adventures in the next edition of the Siuslaw News.

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