

**BIKES** *from page 1A*

“They’re also in about 20 countries building houses, and we’ve got a number of people here who have been to most of those overseas places where we build,” said Schroeder. “Most of those places, you can build a house in a week if you have one of these teams pop in, and you

look at it like it was a week out of my life, but it totally transformed someone else’s life.”

“That’s how I got introduced to this trip,” said Susan Pratt, who has been on 13 rides with the Fuller Center. “I was in Lynette Georgia, and we were building a home for a single mom with three kids; that’s where I met Ryan [Iafigliola]. After we finished it, we handed over the keys to the woman and her kids. One of the volunteers was a construction worker who had bought his own tool belt, and you get attached to your tools. He handed over the whole tool belt tools to one of the kids and you could see there was not a dry eye.

“I still get chills every time I tell the story. When we left, we had really changed their lives, and like you said, it was just a week out of your time.”

The houses built are not free for all.

As Schroeder explained, “The people have a mortgage, but it’s a zero-interest mortgage, so their payments are less, and the repayment schedule is based on what they can afford to pay. Then, because the money was fronted through donations, when these people make payments on their house, it goes back into a pot and the Fuller Center can buy materials for another house. In cities like Indianapolis where they have a very robust covenant partner, the payments from the houses they’ve already built totally drive the funding for the new houses that they build.”

Because homes are built on a volunteer basis, costs are significantly lower as well.

“When you can stand back at the end of the day and see the improvement that your paintbrush or your hammer made, it’s very concrete proof that the world is a better place than when you showed up that morning,” Schroeder said.

Typically, riders would build and renovate homes one day a week out of a 10-week trip.

“These people are so grateful because they struggle as a homeowner or for whatever reason, medical, finance, whatever the case might be, and we come in and help them move forward,” said Alice Myk of Illinois.

Riders on the Fuller Center Bike Adventure are all volunteers, and they get involved in a variety of ways.

“For most of the people, somebody they knew had done it before and they heard stories about how great it is,” said Schroeder. “But a lot of them are like me; they ride, and they’ve always thought, ‘I’d love to ride my bike across the country.’ So, they Google ‘cross country bike trips.’ There are commercial outfits out there, and for \$10,000, they’ll support a trip across the country. People scroll down and see the Fuller Center, and for a cross-country trip with them, you have to raise around \$6,000 in donations, but people can say, ‘At least my money is going to something good, it’s not just going in somebody’s bank account.’”

“That’s how I found out about the Fuller Centers back in 2018,” Myk added. “I was willing to pay \$10,000 to go on a trip across the country, and here I just had to raise around \$5,000.

“And you always exceed it. As soon as you tell the story, what you do and why you’re doing it, people are so generous. It’s very moving.”

In addition, the Fuller Center Bike Adventure riders are often repeat participants.

“There are very few people who are one and done,” said Schroeder.

“Every year we have some newbies, and there’s no age limit,” Myk continued. “We’ve had college kids up to a man who was 82 years old. Everyone has their own reasons why they start, but in the end, I think we still all come back for the same reason.”

As far as choosing Florence for a destination for the West Coast and Florida to Florence rides (which will arrive in Florence on Aug. 8), the group had several reasons.

For one, as Schroeder explained, “Part of it is we have to pick someplace that we can recruit a church. Although we average 70 miles per day, it’s anywhere from 45 to 100 miles, so a lot of it

is driven by where you’re going to be able to find someplace to stop.”

Additionally, Iafigliola chose to return to Florence, “First, because it’s beautiful and on the coast, and the second reason is it had a nice alliteration. We started in Florida and we’re going to Florence, so it’s Florida to Florence. And for us, passing through, we wanted to go down the West Coast route and it seemed like a great place to stop along the way, and we’re happy we were able to.”

According to Scott Baker of Connecticut, Florence is a city that aligns with the Fuller Center mission and vision.

“I think it’s because the folks in this town have opened up their hearts to us,” he said. “That’s the simplest answer. We just came from getting showers at Coastal Fitness — they opened up their doors and let us shower there for free. And this town has opened up their hearts to us. We feel the love from Florence.”

Love keeps the Fuller Center riders going throughout their journeys, and participants grow together through their work.

“I like to think we’re helping each other as much as we are the people whose houses we work on,” Schroeder said.

Baker agreed.

“I’ve never experienced a community where I feel so much love,” he said. “I really haven’t. It’s just amazing.”

“There’s complete trust,” echoed Pratt.

“It’s great therapy,” Schroeder continued, “and you aren’t paying somebody \$400 an hour for it. We’re building each other up and holding each other up, and you know



**Cyclists with the Fuller Center Bike Adventure’s West Coast tour prepare to depart Florence and the Presbyterian Church of the Siuslaw.**

through the drill for that April ride, we felt like there was enough of an acceptance level of those precautions that we could go ahead with the summer rides as well,” Schroeder said.

“We also tested right before we started the trip,” Myk added. “That helped the churches feel comfortable.”

The group has more plans to build homes and complete rides throughout the country and overseas, and as the pandemic calms down and international borders open up, that will become easier to accomplish.

“We had a guy from England come over who wanted to see America — he saw the Fuller reason for riding, so he came and did it,” said Schroeder. “It was really emotional at the end, because he had come to see what at least parts of America can be like.”

When the man returned home, he began looking into what it would take to bring a group of riders to England. That trip hasn’t been scheduled yet due to the pandemic.

“The bottom line is, these aren’t just acquaintances,” Schroeder said.

The Fuller Center is looking to set up new covenant partners, which allows them to give back even more to the communities like Florence who help them along the way.

“We don’t have as many hands-on volunteer days [this trip] because we don’t have any Fuller Centers [along the way],” explained Iafigliola. “We would love to have a Fuller Center in Florence, so when our bike rides come through, it gives us an opportunity to put our hands to work and leave some funds bettering this community, because that’s what we do on our build days.”

The Fuller Center West Coast Bike Adventure riders will be able to work on community projects when they stop in Santa Barbara, Calif., around July 31.

For more information, visit [www.fullercenterbikeadventure.org/](http://www.fullercenterbikeadventure.org/).

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BOTH MEETINGS ARE CURRENTLY ON HOLD.  
WATCH SIUSLAW NEWS FOR RESUMPTION

- Tuesday Evening Group (2nd Tuesday) 5-7 p.m. - Ichiban Chinese/Japanese Restaurant
- Urologist Dr. Bryan Melhiff attends.
- Tuesday Lunch Group (3rd Tuesday) 12 noon - 1:00 p.m. - Ichiban Chinese/Japanese Restaurant
- Urologist Dr. Roger McKimmy attends.

Contact Bob for more information:  
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