

Local biker in cross country benefit ride

5-16-02

BALTIMORE, Md. — Asking friends and family for money can be as precarious as learning to ride a bike, but eighteen Johns Hopkins University students, including David Courson, son of Mike and Kay Courson of Westfield, are committed to pedaling across America this summer in support of a worth cause.

Courson, a graduate of North Country Union High School, is expected to graduate from Hopkins in May 2003.

Courson and others will spend June and July perched atop 36 skinny bicycle tires, traveling a 4,000-mile route between the Homewood campus and San Francisco. Known as the Hopkins 4K for Cancer, the journey aims to raise both money for cancer research and awareness for the disease's prevention.

The journey begins shortly after 9 a.m. on Sunday, June 2, when supporters will attend a bon voyage party before the students leave the university's Homewood campus, 3400 N. Charles St. in Baltimore, Md. From Homewood, the students will ride to the Inner Harbor to dip their bikes' back tires in the water. When they reach San Francisco, the front tires will be dipped in the bay.

The ticket to ride is \$2,500, which each of the riders raised by soliciting donations. The money will be used to sustain the students through the trip, but will primarily be put toward their goal of giving \$50,000 to the American Cancer Society at the end of the road.

Businesses have put the group closer to their goal by paying to have their logos on the riders' jerseys. The Cliff Bar company has donated 200 of its energy bars. The Mt. Washington Bike Shop in Baltimore donat-

ed a bike helmet for each participant. Le Monde gave Hopkins 4K a deep discount on a new road bike for each rider, and Lutherville Bike Shop in Baltimore county assembled the bikes free of charge. WOCT-FM 104.3, a Baltimore classic rock station, has asked the riders to call in during some morning shows this summer. The students are hoping to borrow a van that will be used as a pace car and to carry their gear.

Besides educating people in towns along the way and paying tribute to loved ones lost to cancer, the Hopkins 4K for cancer is also offering the students a change to see their country from over their handlebars rather than through an airplane window.

"It's a chance to be a tourist in my own country," said junior Jen Parker, of Newburyport, Conn., one of the group's five trip leaders. "Everybody knows somebody who has been affected by cancer."

To gear up for the trip, Hopkins 4K for Cancer riders have been hitting the road, slowly increasing their distance and stamina. Most of the riders admit that the trip is going to be harder than they thought. Freshman Travis Snow of New Hartford, Conn., said he had no idea how he was going to get in shape or raise the entry fee. But he sent letters to family and friends and started to work out.

"Now I go to the gym and or ride my new bike nearly every day for more than an hour," Snow said. "Preparing for the trip so far has taught me an important lesson. Big accomplishments are only a bunch of little steps done with persistence and focus."

More information, including a list of scheduled stops and ways to contribute, is available online at <http://www.hopkins4k.org>.