

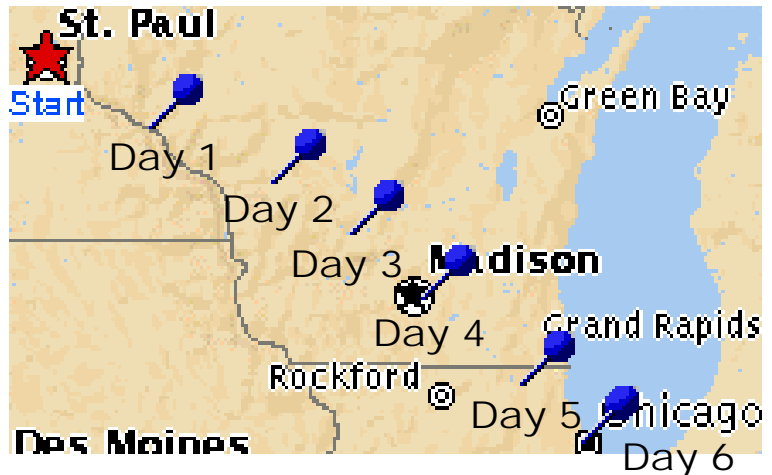
AIDS Ride Update

Post-Ride Information

Twin Cities AIDS Ride 5, July 10 - 15 St. Paul, MN to Chicago, IL, 497 miles

DAY 0 - Sunday, July 9: Registration

Registration day consisted of lines. We had to check in, take our bikes to bike parking, watch the intro and safety video, get our ride stickers, and pair up with our tent mate to get our tent assignment. All in all, it took about 3 hours, but the weather was good and the people were friendly. Some people were still fundraising outside the main building, which thanks to you, I was able to avoid. I still have no idea what to expect. Tomorrow will be the beginning of the adventure...
...but I still have to finish packing...



DAY 1 - Mon, July 10: St. Paul, MN to Wabasha, MN (94 miles)

I had a hard time getting to sleep last night - anticipation can do that. I woke up and caught the 4:27am bus to the starting point at Concordia College. Assorted breakfast items, stretching, and using the restroom was the main agenda before the opening ceremony at 6:00am.



The most touching moment was the procession of the riderless bicycle, which belonged to an AIDS rider who died this last April from AIDS. Four HIV-positive riders, also known as positive pedalers, tearfully led the bike to the stage. Even with all of the fun and excitement in the air, the room fell silent.

The most unexpected moment occurred when the banner and two tall holding posts fell over and the people on the stage ran for safety. Luckily, no one was hurt, but something tells me that wasn't part of the plan.

Having parked my bike in Row 29 of 33, the next 20 minutes were spent waiting for our row to proceed onto the street, so I lathered up with sunscreen and waited...When we finally hit the street, there were hundreds of people lining the street cheering for us as we passed under the street banner. The Mobile Homes Team supporters had group up about 1/4 of mile from the start and I stopped briefly to say hello, before heading on...and waiting...trying to move 1,500 bikes through a single bike lane was difficult at best. Stop and go, stop and go. I wish I had stopped longer to chat with cheering friends earlier, given the lack of our initial progress.

DAY 1 continued

The congestion continued through the outskirts of St. Paul and into the suburbs, but at least we were riding. Some people had flats already and were busy fixing them on the side of the road, which must be frustrating. The first pit-stop came and went - the lines were long since we were still bunched together for the most-part. The second leg produced my first flat tire, one of many as it turned out. Everytime I thought I had the flat problem figured out, another one would crop up. As I write this two weeks later, my bike's front tire is flat. This was a week-long frustration.

I moved through the day riding with a team member, John, who was patient with my tire issues. Even though I was riding at a fast pace, between flats and pit stops, it all evened out to a long day. I decided to nap a bit at lunch and let John continue on. I rode with my friend Julie who was having bike fit problems on the fourth leg of the day along the Cannon River trail. After Red Wing's pit stop I got ancy and set off on my own.

My pace was fast and I felt really good pulling into Lake City's pit stop. I traveled on Hwy 61 a lot during college - this is a much different perspective. It seems longer than I remember it. The maps indicate that the section from Lake City to Redwing is fairly level - someone should check the maps. At some point, the final miles became a determination of will more than a physical ride. That might be something I didn't anticipate - the mental challenge.

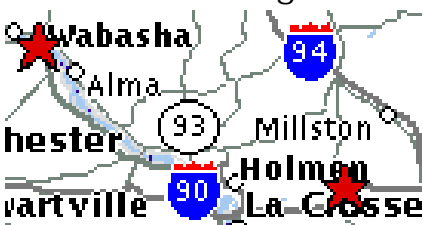
Tired, hot, and sweaty, I pulled into the Wabasha camp to the cheers of fellow riders and crew. All I needed was a shower, a place to rest my body, some food to eat, and a chiropractic adjustment for my neck - all of which I found in due time before the sun set. Clean and full, tomorrow is another day.

DAY 2 - Tues, July 11: Wabasha, MN to Sparta, WI (94 miles)

The aches of yesterday are the pains of today. I awoke to the noise of other riders packing up...at 4:30am. I planned on riding with my friend Gina, who I met at the Ironman Ride at the end of April. We managed to find each other after breakfast and set off for Wisconsin - just across the river from Wabasha.

The day's weather was perfect, and after a few miles, the aches worked themselves out. I enjoy the variety that hills bring - a challenge on the front side; a nice coast on the back. Gina and I have similar riding paces, which works out well.

The first 20 miles was easy. The second, even with the headwind, weren't bad. The ride along the river was beautiful as we passed through small Wisconsin towns and along the Mississippi River. The day began to heat up and



as we move away from the river, the pavement began to pass unannounced as I led and followed Gina, putting one pedal in front of another.

We passed through a few construction zones, the fresh asphalt smooth and black, adding to the heat. We don't talk much as we pedal.

At Pit 5, I'm feeling very tired and hot. I want to rest awhile longer, so Gina goes ahead without me. Everyone else, tall and short, large and thin, seems to be in such good spirits, while I silently wonder how they do it. Throughout the day, Gina and I stopped here and there between pit stops. Those stops are all

Day 2 continued

the more frequent as I try to finish the last 20 miles alone. My body aches and my mind is numb, not to mention my toes. It has been a hard day.

I stop to watch a little league baseball game while I rest in the shade of a utility building. Bikers pass by. Mentally I am shot. Too tired to continue, but too stubborn not to. A couple of riders stop to rest next to me and ask me how I'm doing. I was constantly amazed at the positive attitudes of so many tired people. They encourage me to continue and I leave the rest stop with them, but push ahead for one final surge to camp.

I finally reach the city limits of Sparta and stop for a twizzler from one of the help vehicles. I amble through the streets tired and distraught, nearly feeling sorry for myself. Soon I could hear the music at the finish line. The street was lined with people cheering me in to the bike parking area. Tears rolled down my face. I had made it.

DAY 3 - Wed, July 12: Sparta, WI to Reedsburg, WI (59 miles)

Day 3 promised to be a short day as we traveled along the Sparta-Elroy trail. Consisting of crushed limestone, the trail was harder to ride on than pavement and had 3 tunnels that we walked our bikes through. Other than being annoying, the trail didn't present a problem until it started to rain at pit stop 3.

I set off in the sprinkling rain, which quickly turned into a downpour.

Luckily my rear pack kept my back clear of a mudstripe, although my shoes and socks were coated in mud. I had to just buckle down and keep pedaling. Rain ran down my face and I was entirely soaked by the time I arrived at pit 4, where lunch was being served. The pavillion was crowded with dry riders who decided to wait it out. I ate lunch and since I was already mucky, had few problems with heading back out into the mud.



I was about 4 miles from camp when I got another flat tire. I pulled over to the side of the trail and being cold, muddy, spare tubeless, and lunch for the local mosquitos, was rather annoyed with the situation. A few people passed by, but I waived them on, too frustrated to figure out what to do. After waiting a few minutes, I hailed 3 riders, who stopped their bikes, gave me a spare tube, waited for me through the mosquitos, and then rode with me toward camp. A mile later I had another flat - I was both mad and embarassed (for having such a testy bike).

I finally got back to camp, where I hosed off, did my evening tasks, and went into town to do some laundry and make phone calls. I soon found out that my grandpa had died earlier that day. I would have to leave the ride after the next day.

DAY 4 - Thurs, July 13: Reedsburg, WI to McFarland, WI (90 miles)



I was still arranging to get picked up from the ride that evening and didn't leave camp by 8:30am - they made an exception for me and gave me a ride to the first pit stop.

It was a hot, humid day, but I figured, since it was my last, I didn't have to worry about tiring myself out. I attacked the first hill, but had forgotten my water bottle at the bottom, so I

Day 4 continued

got to do "lung buster" nearly twice.

I wasn't sure what to expect from hill day, but I soon found out that I really enjoyed it - going up was a challenge and coming down the other side was a great rush of speed (hill karma). I was traveling alone for the most part, but it gave me time to sort through my feelings as I pushed myself forward. It was a strange feeling to think I was leaving the ride unfinished.

The day moved quickly and during the afternoon I made a call to my friend to give her directions on where to pick me up. I found out that the funeral had been post-poned until Sunday and I should finish the ride. I was so excited! And then I came outside to find out that I had a flat tire...aaaahhhhh!!!

I got a ride to the next pit stop and figured I was sick of flats and would just take a sag vehicle back to camp. Most people agreed with my frustration, but not everyone...

I ran into Jes, one of the three girls who had helped me with my flat the day before and told her that I was going to be able to finish the ride, but I decided to quit for the day:

"Why?" Well, I've got another flat, I'm out of spares, and I don't have any money to buy a new one.

"Would you keep going if you could fix it?" I guess so.

"I'll loan you some money. Do you want to keep riding?" I guess so. So I fixed the tire with a short-term loan and we finished the day together, riding through the busy streets of Madison and on to camp.

I'm grateful Jes challenged me to keep going...it made all the difference in the world.

DAY 5 - Fri, July 14: McFarland, WI to McHenry, IL (90 miles)

Jes and I agreed to keep riding together. We had similar speeds on the road (quick) and in the pit stops (slow). Our motto became "Ride strong, Pit long." She really was a great hill climber, keeping up with me (or I with her), hill for hill.

Day 5 brought us through the rolling flatlands of corn fields, which wouldn't normally be all that thrilling, except that we had the wind at our backs (wind karma). I live for the few seconds that the wind is at your back and when your speed matches the wind's, instead of the rushing of the wind, you hear total silence. For the most part, the day (and we) flew by...

Except for the occasional freshly tarred road, I just remember going fast and having fun on day 5. Near Lake Geneva, WI there was a kid dressed up in a Santa Claus outfit spraying people with a water gun. As we crossed into Illinois and approached our camp at McHenry, we were greeted with a red ribbon on every post, pole, and tree along the road for at least 10 miles - the "ribbon lady" had been working hard the day.

I remember this day as one that felt like I was in a groove - like I was finally getting the hang of everything physically and emotionally. Unfortunately, the ride was nearly over.



DAY 6 - Sat, July 15: McHenry, IL to Chicago, IL (70 miles)

Day 6 was a bittersweet day. The crew gave out temporary tattoos that said "HERO," and we began our day. Jes and I wrote "Ride Strong" and "Pit Long" on the back of our legs to publicize our fast/slow riding/resting philosophy. Riding out of camp on a cool, dewey morning, we rode toward the end of our journey, moving from corn rows to suburbs and into the city.

The day was short, but the going a bit slower. Eventually we made it to Northwestern University, where a bunch of us gathered to ride into downtown together. Numbering ourselves 1-12, we counted off at each major intersection 1, 2, 3, 4...10, 11, 12...not really because we thought we'd lost anyone, but just to confirm our togetherness that was soon ending.

We rested at the holding area so everyone (all 1500) could collect together and ride to the closing ceremonies as a group. We took pictures, ate and drank together, and recounted memories of the week gone by, but soon it was time to leave.

The closing ceremonies were great - thousands of friends showed up to cheer our arrival. Young (15) and old (72) had begun and finished our 500 mile odyssey.

That is one thing that I won't forget - everywhere along the ride, people kept thanking us. An older woman at closing ceremonies who said that both of her sons had died of AIDS...kids squirting us with hoses...the crew...the towns... everyone had gratitude for what we were doing. They seemed to feel personally touched by AIDS and felt like we were doing something to directly help them. I hadn't thought of it that way, but I guess we were, be it directly through the charities or through awareness on the news, we were bringing a message of hope to a lot of people.



DAY 7 - Post-ride Update

I flew to Tennessee to attend my grandfather's funeral, getting up at 4:30am on Sunday to catch my flight. Most of Sunday and Monday involved frequent naps - my body wasn't that sore, just exhausted.

Since the ride has ended, my right knee still aches and my smallest 3 toes on each foot continue to have numbness. My left wrist is still injured from day 1, when I caught my bike from falling off of the bike rack and it bent back awkwardly. It all really doesn't matter though - it seems inconsequential.

Many people have asked if I would do it again. I'm not sure. Both fundraising and training take a lot of time and effort. I wonder if my donors (that's you), have developed "donor fatigue," especially if I asked again next year. There are other charity rides that I'd be interested in doing as well. I'm still not sure. Maybe you can voice your opinion in a quasi-vote of sorts...

I hope you felt informed, updated, and that your money is being put to good use. I appreciated your support. I still do.

AIDSRide Update

AIDSRide Pictures



Day 3: Exiting a tunnel.



Day 4: A really long hill.



Day 5: A lot of corn.



Day 2: Shadow biking.



Day 1: Opening ceremonies.

AIDSRide Pictures p2



Day 6: Riding on a suburban Chicago bikepath.



Day 6: Riding on a Chicago street under the elevated subway. Note the special reflective tape on our bike bags (flash).



Day 6: Riding to closing ceremonies.



Day 6: Riding toward downtown Chicago.



Day 6: Closing ceremonies.



Day 6: The Riderless Bike at closing ceremonies.

AIDSRide Update

Donor Information

Total Donations (as of July 10): \$3,179.16
\$6.40/mile pedaled
THANK YOU!

This is the most updated list I can come up with...I hope I didn't miss anyone - donor updates aren't sent again until late-August...I know there are a lot of causes that ask for your donations, but I really appreciate that supporting me on the AIDSRide was one of them.

Jeff Alberts
Anonymous
Bess Brockington
Keith & Amber Butcher
Ron & Shelley Cacka
Susan & Byron Danielson
Jeremy deFiebre
Nancy Edstrom
Dennis Galvin
Kathy & Gary Gansemer
Tim Gerlach
Mark & Mary Hartwig
Shawn & Lisa Hegard
Leslie Hillman
Scott Hillman
Amy Kerber
Mike Koch-Weser
Rachel Leatham
Sarah Lynch
Paige & Kevin Manger
Maureen Maslinski
Denise McCabe
Patty & Bud Merrick
Lisa & Ron Muller
Ben Murray
Jesse Murray
Norma Myers
Bruce Nelson
Nancy & Butch Nix

Tarik Nuhodzic & Becky Dennison
Julie O'Sullivan
Tricia O'Sullivan
Karen Padden
Susan Patterson
Kent Peterson
Gia Pionek
Marilee Reu
Becky Ries
Bill Ries
Jennifer Ringold
Ron Schwenn
Pam Seay
Janet Streff
Barbara & Bill Swafford
Howard Swafford
Paul & Helen Swafford
Bekah Taylor
Bob & Norma Taylor
Linda Taylor (unrelated)
Susan Taylor
Michelle Tito
Katy Walker
Jennifer Ward and Damon Dubord
Isabelle Wiske
Liz Wiske
Karlotta & Michael Wolfgram
Beth Zabel
Paul & Monica Zobitz

SPECIAL THANKS:

- * Damon Dubord, Amy Kerber, Maureen Maslinski, and Jen Ward for sharing catsitting duties.
- * Danette Buskovich for collecting the mail and watering the plants at my apartment.
- * Nancy Nix for her hospitality Saturday night after the ride.