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## WKU students bike to E'town, raise money for Alzheimer's ride

ANDREW HARP The News-Enterprise

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Justin Geilear, director of ride operations for Bike4Alz, stands Sunday next to the table set up at Texas Roadhouse in Elizabethtown. Bike4Alz biked from Bowling Green to Elizabethtown to raise money and awareness for Alzheimer's disease.

ANDREW HARP/The News-Enterprise

According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, the No. 6 cause of death in the United States is Alzheimer's disease.

At Western Kentucky University, a group of students called Bike4Alz will be biking cross country to raise money and awareness for the disease.

The group will drive to California and then bike May 18 from the California coast to Virginia Beach, Virginia, arriving approximately on July 28. This ride is about 3,600 miles long across around 13 states. The bikers will average about 70 miles a day.

Along the way, the students will hold events to raise money and spread awareness at various locations in the country. The goal this year to raise \$100,000 for the Alzheimer's Association.

In preparation for this ride, the students biked Sunday from Bowling Green to the Texas Roadhouse in Elizabethtown, where they had a table set up to raise awareness and money.

Justin Geilear, director of ride operations, said he became involved in the organization because the disease had affected his life.

Geilear said his grandfather has Alzheimer's, and currently is in a memory care facility. He said he remembers seeing his grandfather after school, playing chess and listening to his war stories. Now, Geilear said it's difficult for him to formulate sentences.

"I really am very passionate about trying to try to find a cure and trying to not let people go through the same thing," he said.

Cy Whitler, one of the riders who has been involved since 2019, said he found out about the organization through his fraternity, Gamma Delta Fiji. Whitler said his grandmother passed away from Alzheimer's.

Because of the COVID-19 pandemic, the ride for the summer of 2020 was canceled, but the group still was able to raise money.

"We were all pretty torn up about it," Whitler said.

Whitler said the team practices and often trains for the ride, including 20- to 30-mile rides on the weekends. He said those who are in the ride are not necessarily trained bike riders, with some even being novices.

Geilear said he was told by previous riders that no amount of training can be done to fully prepare for the entire trip. He said he's particularly worried about the more mountainous regions of the country they'll have to ride through.

During the ride, individuals can write in people's names on the website at [bike4alz.org/dedicate-a-day](https://bike4alz.org/dedicate-a-day). At the start of each day of the ride, Geilear said they will read off the names for motivation for who they're riding for.

"I'm very excited. I'm ready to go," Whitler said. "I wish we could go tomorrow."

Those looking to support the group can do so at [bike4alz.org/support-us](https://bike4alz.org/support-us) and can track the group's progress on Twitter and Instagram @Bike4Alz.

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