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Bike4Alz riders campaign to end Alzheimer's with local event

By AARON MUDD amudd@bgdailynews.com Jul 6, 2018



When Alisa Anderson pictures Alzheimer's disease, her mind immediately goes to her mother, Elaine Ford, who passed away from the disease earlier this year.

Now Anderson is cheering on her daughter's boyfriend, Noah Rudloff, as he travels on a 3,600-mile bicycle journey across the country to raise money and awareness for Alzheimer's research. Rudloff is one of 11 Western Kentucky University students making the trip by bicycle during this year's Bike4Alz fundraising campaign.

"It's really sweet to see what these guys have done," said Anderson, who attended a fundraising event Friday at the SOKY Marketplace. The event featured a silent auction, food trucks and live music from Jordan Allen and the Bellwethers, among other festivities.

After pedaling into town this week, the group will make stops in Elizabethtown, Louisville and Lexington before finishing the last leg of the journey to Virginia Beach, Va. The trip, starting in San Francisco, has so far taken the group across mountain ranges, deserts and farmlands.

Along with Rudloff, the group includes Alex Stackhouse, Erik Roepke, Jake Edmunds, Seth Chaney and Wil Scott, all of Bowling Green; Ethan Hunt of Franklin; Griffin Beckner of Murfreesboro, Tenn.; Jacob Karaglanis of Goshen; Matthew Crawford of Somerset; and Jeremy Latham of Paducah. Drivers are Griffin Heltsley and J.B. Carter, both of Bowling Green, according to a news release.

Stackhouse, a rising senior and Bowling Green native, described the trip as "the most physically challenging thing I've ever done before ... but we're happy to be doing it."

Stackhouse said the group is closing in on \$28,000 so far in its fundraising campaign. Although he has no immediate connection to Alzheimer's disease, Stackhouse said the trip has been eye-opening.

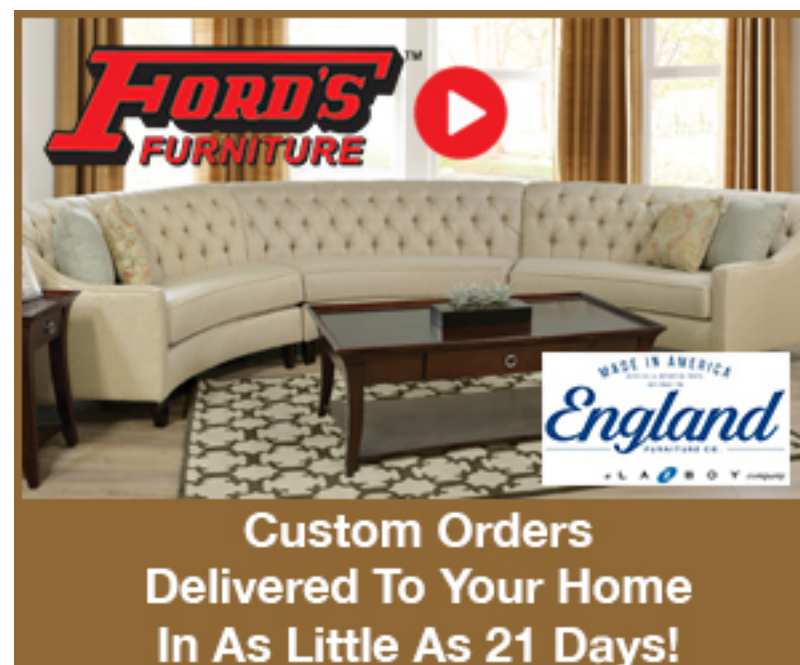
The group has visited care centers and interacted with patients across the country. He said he's seen how helpless the disease can make a loved one.

Alzheimer's is the sixth-leading cause of death in the U.S. and more than 5 million Americans live with it. There is no known cure.

Supporters interested in donating to the group can do so at Bike4Alz.org. All proceeds go to the Alzheimer's Association.

When the riders recently passed through Paducah, Stackhouse said a woman was cheering them on from the side of the road. He later found out through social media that she had been diagnosed with an early form of the disease.

“(That) gave us a great connection to that day,” he said of the group's travels.



Melissa Rudloff said she has worried a little as her son traveled across the country. But she realizes the importance of what Noah is doing.

“I think it is amazing for them to think outside themselves,” she said. “They inspire us to do that.”

Roepke, a rising junior from Bowling Green, said the goal of the campaign is to inspire people to take action to end Alzheimer’s disease.

Roepke never got to meet his great-grandmother, who passed away from the disease. As he rides to honor her, Roepke said the group is also looking ahead to expand the nonprofit. He said the group has talked about creating teams in other states.

“Our biggest goal is to raise as much money and awareness as we can,” he said. “We’d love to have as much support as we can.”

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