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## Bike4Alz event next week will benefit Alzheimer's Association

AARON MUDD [amudd@bgdailynews.com](mailto:amudd@bgdailynews.com) 1 hr ago

Bike4Alz cyclists cheer Thursday, July 5, 2018, as they ride along Russellville Road. The group is in the midst of biking from San Francisco to Virginia Beach to raise awareness and money for Alzheimer's Disease research. (Bac Totrong/photo@bgdailynews.com)

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A cross-country, 3,600-mile bicycle journey to raise money for Alzheimer's awareness hasn't been easy for a group of Western Kentucky University fraternity brothers, but that isn't discouraging them.

Jack Blair, a rising WKU junior and Phi Gamma Delta (FIJI) fraternity brother, said the group of 14 students has been hailed on – twice – and dealt with snowstorms and tornado warnings, along with car trouble and losing the keys to its equipment trailer along the way.

Still, though, he wouldn't trade anything for the chance to climb mountain ranges and bike hundreds of miles with his friends, he said.

"I'd do it again if I had the opportunity," Blair said.

So far, this year's Bike4Alz fundraising campaign has generated about \$42,000 to support the Alzheimer's Association. Next week, the group will be back in Bowling Green for a fundraising event meant to help meet its \$70,000 goal.

The event called Tops End Alz will take place from 5 to 8 p.m. Wednesday at the SOKY Marketplace in downtown Bowling Green. The event will have live music, food from Steamer Seafood and a silent auction.

"We feel like we have a big opportunity to raise a lot of money and to hear some more stories," Blair said, adding the entire team will be there.

Kate Kaetzel, a WKU Spirit Master and vice president of finance for Alpha Delta Pi, told the Daily News in an email that the event will feature live music from Weston Vernon Music and food vendors from Steamer Seafood and RAW.

The silent auction will include items ranging from a grill from Lowe's to gift cards and packages for many local businesses, she said. Admission is \$5 and tickets are also available at [eventbrite.com/e/tops-end-alz-tickets-63155208930](https://www.eventbrite.com/e/tops-end-alz-tickets-63155208930). Kaetzel said the fraternity brothers have worked hard to raise money for their cause.

"They're biking across the country from San Francisco to Virginia Beach," she said, adding that she hopes people turn out for the Alzheimer's awareness event because "it's a disease that affects so many."

For those who can't attend, the nonprofit is requesting donations at [bike4alz.org](http://bike4alz.org).

During their travels, Blair and his friends have heard stories from people across the country, all united in their connection to Alzheimer's disease, which almost 6 million Americans are living with, according to the Alzheimer's Association.

"It's really hit home with a lot of us because a bunch of us are personally affected by it as well," Blair said.

One of the more touching stories came when the group was at a low point, Blair said. While passing through Lake Tahoe, the keys to the team's equipment trailer had been lost and a locksmith was called in to change the locks, he said.



After completing his work and learning their story, the locksmith said "I can't charge you guys for this. What you guys are doing is awesome," Blair said. The locksmith's grandmother passed away from the disease, Blair said.

Many of the students participating in this year's Bike4Alz campaign have personal connections to the disease, Blair said, counting himself among them.

Blair's great-grandfather, J.D. Skaggs, passed away from the disease when Blair was very young, he said. Years later, the toll it took on his family is still felt, Blair said.

"He's the reason I'm riding," Blair said.

On Wednesday, the team was stopped in Missouri and planned to be in Paducah on Saturday, Blair said. After stopping in Kentucky, the group will continue on for the last leg of the trip and arrive in Virginia Beach on July 20.

This year's riders include Ken Barlow, Max Benningfield, Jack Blair, Harrison Garden, Gabe Hitz, Jacob Howard, Tate McClard, Parker Phelps, Tucker Phelps, Caleb Strunk, Dylan Taylor and David Weafer. This year's drivers include Alex Crittenden and Tyler Kirby.

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## Aaron Mudd

Education reporter. Covers education and related issues, focusing primarily on the Bowling Green and Warren County public school districts and Western Kentucky University.

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