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Bike4Alz rides again

By AARON MUDD amudd@bgdailynews.com

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Left to right: Will Thompson, Jordan Hitz, Colin O'Hare, (back row) Ben Betts, Kyle Allen, Justin Geilear, JT Stoll, Cannon McDaniel, Trey Sims, Chaney Ruby, (front row) Nick Lee, Jake York, Cy Whitler, Cole Shanks. Photo courtesy of Bike4Alz.

Submitted

It's a tradition more than a decade strong – when a group of Western Kentucky University fraternity brothers from Phi Gamma Delta set out on a cross-country bicycle journey, traveling thousands of miles to raise money and awareness for Alzheimer's disease research.

For Cy Whitler, a rising senior from Greenville, it's a trek he's been drawn to since first rushing and pledging with FIJI at WKU. He has been spurred on by memories of his great-grandmother, who passed away from the disease.

Unfortunately, though, his fellow FIJI brothers had to shelve that dream last year with the outbreak of the coronavirus pandemic. Now, Bike4Alz is riding again.

"We're all more excited than ever," Whitler said of this year's 14-member team, which was driving cross-country with bicycles in tow when he spoke with the Daily News. Bound for San Francisco, where the group was expected to start their trip Saturday, Whitler said the team made an impromptu excursion to the Grand Canyon on Thursday.

"We're tired. We're sore," but in less than 24 hours the team was expecting to arrive at their destination and start their journey, which will last several weeks this summer. "We're looking forward to that," Whitler said.

After having to postpone last year's trip, Whitler said the group is "even more driven" this year to complete it.

The route is different every year, though this year the team is planning to travel from San Francisco to Utah, Colorado, Missouri, Tennessee, Kentucky, West Virginia and then finally Virginia.

Along with raising awareness along the way, Whitler said, "we also want to give hope to the people who have Alzheimer's" and the health care workers who do memory

care.

The FIJI brothers are hoping to raise \$100,000 in donations for Alzheimer's research, having raised about \$10,000 so far toward their goal.

Donations can be made through the Bike4Alz website or through the team's Venmo money transfer account @bike4alz.

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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.