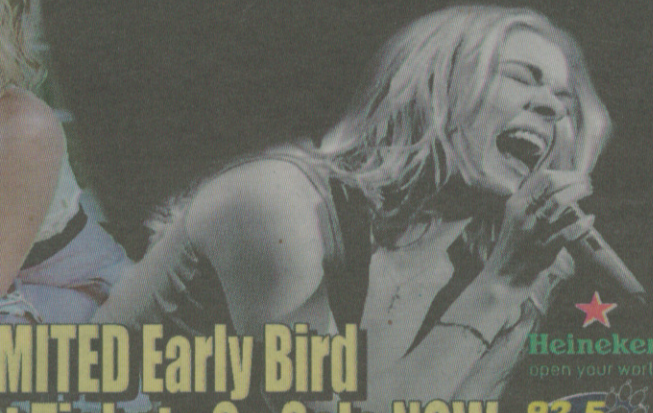


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Four of Denver Rescue Mission's Rescue Riders who are cycling from Denver to Phoenix to raise money for meals. Photo by Courtesy of Denver Rescue Mission

Amateur cyclists ride to Phoenix to feed hungry

By Danielle Charbonneau
YourHub Contributor

As the first wave of morning commuter traffic pulled into downtown May 31, Denver Rescue Mission's Rescue Riders convened in front of the Lawrence Street Shelter, ready to embark on an extreme, 900-mile bike trek over the Rocky Mountains, from Denver to Phoenix, hoping to raise enough money to feed 20,000 of the city's hungry and homeless.

The ride, which is officially titled Break the Cycle — 900 Miles Against Hunger, would be a daunting trip for even the most experienced cyclists. But for the Rescue Riders — a five-man amateur cycling team made up of a few Mission staff, a board member and Mission CEO Brad Meuli — the journey appeared even more intimidating.

Huddling up in prayer that brisk morning, Meuli asked God for the strength and courage to complete the excursion, and more importantly, reach their goal. Denver Rescue Mission provides shelter for about 200,000 and meals for about 700,000 people annually, relying fully on donors to meet the financial need. Break the Cycle will be one of the year's most pressing events for fundraising.

For the Rescue Riders, it will also be the most physically daunting. By June 4, with more than 430 miles down and about 483 to go, the reality of the challenge had sunk in.

"Gone is the excitement created by the novelty of the adventure. Gone is the un-

certainty of what it might be like riding nearly 100 miles day after day. Gone are so many of the what-ifs," said Kyle Petrie, director of operations for the Mission.

But as the challenge has increased, so have the funds: The team has raised just over 14,000 meals for the homeless. One man in Bailey handed the team a check as it passed through.

"I cannot tell you how much that lifted our spirits," said Meuli. "We still have a ways to go — both in the physical sense, and in a fundraising one, but we're well on our way."

The spirit of community and interdependence has been felt throughout the ride.

"We've worked together, taking turns at the lead, trying our best to block the wind for the team," said Josh Geppelt, director of the Lawrence Street Shelter and one of the Rescue Riders. "As I think about the 1,000 men, women and children that spent the night at a Denver Rescue Mission facility last night, one thing I am certain of is their need for community."

The team is scheduled to finish Break the Cycle in Phoenix on June 10, where some of the members will attend the 2013 National Conference for the Association of Gospel Rescue Missions. Supporters can follow the teams progress online and make donations by visiting DenverRescueMission.org/bike.

Danielle Charbonneau is a public relations intern for Denver Rescue Mission.



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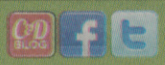
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