

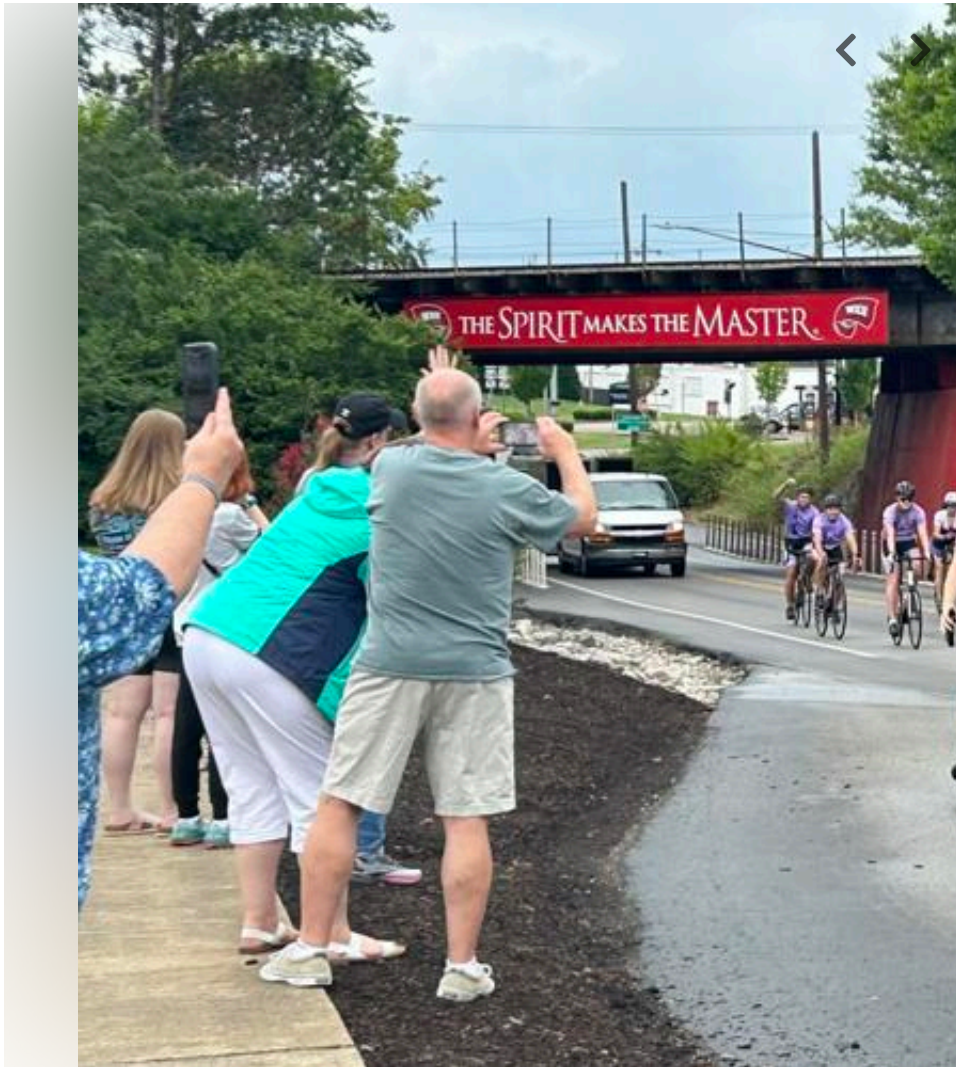
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# Bike4Alz riders make Bowling Green pit stop

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Western Kentucky University Phi Gamma Delta students ride into camp with Bike4Alz to raise money for Alzheimer's research.

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Overcast skies, sporadic lightning and the threat of rain couldn't stop bike wheels from spinning this weekend.

A group of 12 Western Kentucky University Phi Gamma Deltas have been spending their summer biking coast-to-coast to raise money for Alzheimer's research, the 11th squad of Fiji fraternity brothers to make the trek with fundraising organization Bike4Alz.

The band of riders completed the leg from Nashville to Bowling Green on Saturday, passing underneath the WKU-branded train bridge on Russellville Road to be greeted by friends and loved ones in the Creason Lot.

"There's nothing that can really prepare you for a 3,600 mile journey across the country," rising junior Mason Alexander said as the crew hugged, took pictures and caught up with family members.

Bike4Alz was created in 2010 after founder and WKU alumnus Tyler Jury lost his grandfather to Alzheimer's. He and five Fiji brothers biked across the U.S. that summer, bringing in \$60,000 to combat the disease.

Since that first journey, the nonprofit has raised over half a million dollars for Alzheimer's research.

Trey Englehardt, a rising senior, chose to suit up for Team 11 after hearing from other Fijis who had made the trip.

"The cycling is just the medium through which the trip happens," Englehardt said. "Going by car is one thing, but when you get to ride a bike, go across the country and be a part of the natural environment, take roads big cars can't take ... it's just a whole new experience."

He said the trip offered the chance to be part of something bigger than himself.

“To have a tangible impact in the fight against Alzheimer’s is awesome,” he said.

Englehardt said he was feeling everything from excitement to fear when the group first set out from San Francisco in May.

“More than anything I was excited just that we had finally done it,” he said. “We had been talking about it forever and dipping our tires in the Pacific, getting ready to go, was awesome.”

The dozen Fijis have knocked out about 2,400 miles of road since their departure, spending nights in churches and tents along the way.

Exiting the Rockies has been Englehardt’s favorite leg of the journey thus far.



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A photograph of an older man with a white beard, wearing a light blue button-down shirt, smiling and giving a thumbs-up gesture.

“We had a descent day where we descended like 5,000 feet. The climb up isn’t fun but coming down was awesome,” he said. “We rode along a river and came down from the mountains with snowy peaks, and it was the most beautiful thing we’ve ever seen.”

Alexander said his favorite experience on the trip has been visiting a handful of memory care centers and meeting the folks who benefit from organizations like Bike4Alz.

“Seeing their faces light up when we walk in and getting to tell them what we do and what we’re about, them cheering us on is definitely a big part of it,” Alexander said.

On the flip side, an endless series of climbs and falls out in Nevada proved to be the section both Englehardt and Alexander could have done without.

“It’s very repetitive, you go up a mountain and you go flat for 15 miles and then go up another mountain,” Englehardt said. “The mountains you see in front of you, they look so far away but eventually you’re going to go up it. Then it starts raining on us, so that was not a fun day.”

Conditions were chilly for the riders during the West Coast stretch, forcing them to break out their sweatshirts. Once the group hit Missouri, the heat and humidity shot up fast.

“We’ve been getting up at 5 a.m. every day and getting on our bikes, getting it over with as soon as we can,” he said.

Englehardt said he tries to text and call family as often as possible, but cell service can get pretty spotty.

“You get pretty homesick,” he said. “You’re on the bike for 8-9 hours a day so you think back to so many things you could be doing, so much that I’ve given up this summer, time with the family.”

Team 11 enjoyed a rest day Sunday before it set out for Elizabethtown, chipping away toward its ultimate destination of Virginia Beach.

It’s not all downhill from here – “we have some 6,000 foot elevation days in Virginia,” Alexander said – but the young men are in good spirits.

The trip is expected to wrap up July 27, with stops scheduled in places like Louisville, Lexington, Blacksburg, West Virginia, and Richmond, Virginia.

*Those wishing to donate to Bike4Alz can do so at [bike4alz.org/support-us](https://bike4alz.org/support-us).* Team 11 has a fundraising goal of \$150,000.

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