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Alumna Participates in FACE AIDS Cross-Country Bike Ride

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BLOOMINGTON, Ill. – Illinois Wesleyan University alumna Kirsten Pufahl has brought new meaning to taking the road less traveled by. After graduation in May 2010, Pufahl packed her duffle bag and headed out west to the sunny shores of Palo Alto, Ca. There, on June 14, she began a 67-day, 4,000-mile biking journey across the United States as part of the FACE AIDS Ride Against AIDS 2010 campaign.

This is the third year of the FACE AIDS campaign, a not-for-profit student organization whose mission is to mobilize and inspire students to fight AIDS in Africa. The organization, which works in collaboration with Partner's in Health, has raised over \$1,700,000 since it's inception to support the fight against AIDS in Zambia and Rwanda.

Pufahl, who graduated from IWU with a degree in anthropology, hit the trails with six other riders from Stanford University and the University of Wyoming. The team has made stops along the way for speaking engagements to spread awareness about the impacts of AIDS and the FACE AIDS mission. Each rider will attempt to raise \$5,000 by the time they complete their journey on Aug. 19 in Boston, Ma.

“I have been involved with FACE AIDS for two years,” said Pufahl, who joined the organization when it came to campus in 2008. “This is a cause I believe in. I joined the campaign because I was drawn to the demands of the ride, the potential to meet so many people, see the country along the way and do something meaningful for myself.”

So far the riders have braved the badlands of South Dakota, battled head winds in Nebraska and endured the scorching heat in Nevada, traveling approximately 3,500 miles, with 500 remaining. While initially the riders endured cramped calves and sore hamstrings, they have now passed the point of fatigue and have adjusted to biking between 60 and 85 miles a day for five days, after which they have a day of rest.

“The trip has been demanding, especially through the mountain ranges and when we decide to do high mileage day,” said Pufahl, a former member of the IWU cross country and track teams. “But I think it has been more important to stay mentally strong and focused with the purpose of the ride in the back of my mind.”

Despite the physically tolling aspect of the ride, Pufahl says she has truly enjoyed being a part of this adventure and will never forget the memories she has made along the way.

“We will all walk away from this experience with a ton of life lessons and experiences that can be applied in any personal, work or group situations in the future,” said Pufahl.

If you would like to learn more about Pufahl's story or donate money to the cause visit www.faceaids.org/raa.

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