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Cruising Toward An End to HIV/AIDS

by Winnie McCroy
EDGE Editor
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From September 15 to September 18, more than 250 cyclists and 50 crew members will trek 275 miles from Boston to New York in the 22nd Annual Cycle for the Cause. The ride raises money for the HIV and AIDS programs at New York City's Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual & Transgender Community Center. Last year's event raised more than \$800,000.

"This year, we have an ambitious goal to break the million-dollar mark," said Center Executive Director Glennnda Testone. "That will allow us to do even more for our community."

Riders are asked to raise \$2,750 (\$2,000 for those under 30), and crew members are asked to raise \$500. All hotels, meals, massages, bike tech and medical attention are covered.

Funds raised will be used to fund 96,000 rapid HIV tests to prevent more than 78,400 HIV transmissions as well as thousands of safer sex kits, train youth as leaders in the fight against HIV and AIDS, and care for more than 104,000 people living with HIV. When people are in treatment for HIV, they are less likely to spread new infections.



Glennnda Testone leads her team to the finish line (Source:cycleforthecause.org)

The Center also provides 1,800 counseling and group sessions for people living with HIV and AIDS. Funds will also provide health and wellness programs for youth and adults; arts, entertainment and cultural events; parenthood and family support services; substance abuse treatment and support; and affordable meeting rooms and event space. This includes outreach to those most at risk for new infections, including transgender women, LGBT youth and communities of color.

These services are invaluable for the 133,000 New Yorkers living with HIV and the estimated 3,000 more who will be diagnosed with HIV this year. With more programs like this, New York City could reach its AIDS-Free NY 2020 goal: down to 750 annual new infections from an estimated 3,000.

"Many people who do the ride have been there from the beginning and are long-term survivors and activists, so this year we are telling them to make sure they are also part of the end of AIDS. Because we have the capability to end this disease," said Testone.

Cycle for the Cause attracts many longtime riders, including the teams Goldman Sachs, The Eagle, CenterPieces, Out Cycling, Google, PepsiCo, Amex, BNY Mellon, Team Star Wars, Team Kyle, and new youth team the Bald Flyers. Sponsors include the Eagle NYC, Whole Foods Market, PepsiCo, General Motors, Coors Light, Al's Cycle Solutions, Mamma Chia and Lenox Hill.

"We're crossing our fingers that we can double the number of riders and crew this year," said Testone. "We also have almost 10,000 people donate to the cause, so when I think of the exponential impact that we're having, we're doing a good job spreading information about the prevention of HIV/AIDS."

But Cycle for the Cause also attracts many new riders, including this year's newbies, Kevin Robinson and



Hendrix Hess (Source:Courtesy Hendrix Hess)

Hendrix Hess. Both men say they are riding to help prevent new HIV infections.

Last summer, Indiana transplant Hess was riding around the city on the first bike he's had since he was a kid. He began thinking about long rides he could do and joined up with the LGBT group Out Cycling. He heard about Cycle for the Cause through them, but he thought 275 miles was too long of a ride. At least until he met Ride Recruiter Michael Browne.

"He talked about the ride to me and my boyfriend, Jeff, and we signed up right there on the spot!" said Hess. "The way he spoke about it, I thought, I can make it happen! I signed up to ride, and Jeff signed up for the crew. Michael even gave us a tour of the Center and showed us how the funds are used and the people the LGBT Center supports."



(Source:cycleforthecause.org)

Hess will ride with the Out Cycling team of about 10 riders and hopes that the funds he raises will be used to prevent HIV infection and treat those living with HIV and AIDS.

"I grew up in rural Indiana, and there was no LGBT center in my hometown," said Hess. "The services at the Center here are ones I could have really used growing up. Knowing how difficult that was for me, and is for youth here, the fact that I can make an impact is huge."

Robinson is also a first-year rider who was looking for a long charity ride when he found Cycle for the Cause. He's recruited a friend to join him, and he hopes that their efforts will raise awareness around HIV infection.

"There's this feeling that it's over, but it's not," said Robinson. "It's thought of as a manageable disease, but people in poverty still can't afford treatment. So those who are donating may save a life by getting drugs to those who can't afford them."

"It's so much more than just medication -- it's preventing HIV to begin with," added Hess. "We can't lose sight of that. We have great medicine that can help prolong lives, but it's no magic pill; at the end of the day, it's still devastating. We want to get to the point where we don't need medication because the disease isn't here."



(Source:cycleforthecause.org)

Robinson, who works in social media marketing, sees a lot of shareable content cross his desk, but he hopes that the Cycle for the Cause message gets to people who would never think twice about contributing.

"Just seeing my friends donate, I see that people really do care," he said. "And me doing my part to raise awareness will help others with treatment and prevention. I think this is going to be an annual thing for me."

Cyclists condition all year long via shorter training rides so that when the big ride comes, they are ready. They even come together throughout the spring at social events to help recruit new riders and maximize the number of participants and funds raised to fight HIV and AIDS.

"I think it's critically important, because AIDS is a disease we can really have an impact on: the more we talk about it, the more money we raise, the more of an impact we can have," said Testone. "I have heard from long-term survivor friends that this disease is evolving, and the long-term effects of medications are something you want to avoid. We want to make sure we're helping people who are aging with this disease, but we also want to help people avoid it by not seroconverting. Working together, we will be able to end HIV in our lifetime."

For more information or to make a donation, visit cycleforthecause.org.

Cycle for the Cause



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Winnie McCroy is the Women on the EDGE Editor, HIV/Health Editor, and Assistant Entertainment Editor for EDGE Media Network, handling all women's news, HIV health stories and theater reviews throughout the U.S. She has contributed to other publications, including The Village Voice, Gay City News, Chelsea Now and The Advocate, and lives in Brooklyn, New York.

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I am indeed very happy for my life; My name is Vargas cynthia maye, I never thought that I will live on earth before the year runs out. I have been suffering from a deadly disease (HIV) for the past 5 years now; I had spent a lot of money going from one places to another, from churches to churches, hospitals have been my every day residence. Constant checks up have been my hobby not until last Month, I was searching through the internet, I saw a testimony on how DR. Ben helped someone in curing her HIV disease, quickly I copied his email which is (drbenharbalhome@gmail.com).I spoke to him, he ... [See More](#)

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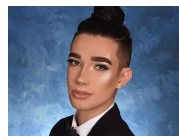
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