

The Wheeled World

By Carolyn Fox '09



If a group of recent college graduates tell you that they've just been spinning their wheels since receiving their diplomas, odds are that's not good news—unless you're talking to **Kurtis Alward, Nicholas Girard, and Kevin**

Corkrum. On two separate

expeditions this past summer, these '07 Champlain grads rode cross-country on bicycle and moped to raise money in the fight against cancer. Cyclist Alward and four friends traveled west. Moped riders Girard and Corkrum, along with friend Tom Sands, retraced a Vermonter's historic odyssey east from San Francisco. Although the teams' paths didn't cross along the way, the riders report a similar satisfaction at seeing the country while supporting a worthy cause.

BICYCLING FROM BAY TO BAY

Visit www.coasttocoastforhope.com to donate, read travel blogs, view pictures, and learn more about the foundation.

The summer of 2007 actually marked the second cross-country bicycle trip launched by Coast to Coast for Hope, a foundation created in 2003 by Brian Alward when his father, Pete Alward, was diagnosed with prostate cancer. The first crossing, in summer 2004, involved four riders cycling from the Atlantic Ocean to the Pacific Ocean—and netting more than \$35,000 in pledge donations for the American Cancer Society. Pete Alward recovered from the illness, but his sons decided to continue the fund-raising tradition. The 2007 ride was Kurtis Alward's first, one he began working toward during his senior year at Champlain College.

On May 26, Alward and four other riders began pedaling away from Yorktown, Virginia, and 54 days later reached Pacific City, Oregon. Alward and riding

buddy Hayden Coon, a 2006 University of Vermont graduate, followed the Trans-America Trail along a southern route to the coast, while Tristan Schneider, Bryce Setta, and Henry Stayduhar, all '07 UVM graduates, followed slightly behind. Before setting out, the team had raised more than \$10,000 by sending letters to friends and family members; they sought corporate matching contributions after completing their journey. Kurtis Alward, a Marketing major at Champlain, functioned as the Coast to Coast for Hope marketing consultant, integrating the bicycle trip into his coursework and leveraging the skills he developed in classes to spur on the effort.

"I focused most of my efforts on improving the organization's Web site," Alward says. "I was able to use what I learned in Web Development, Online Visibility, Google AdWords, Google Analytics, and Search Engine Optimization to push the Web site to where it is today and enhance Coast to Coast for Hope's online marketing."

With the cross-country trip now complete, Alward has his sights set on a marketing career in the New York City area. His first few months out of college surely offered some valuable preparation. "The most outstanding part of our journey would have to be the people," he says. "We met an unbelievable number of kindhearted people along our expedition. Whether these people bought us a meal, opened their home for our use, picked up the next drink, or donated money to our cause, these people were genuine and amazing. They show the true spirit of mankind and give hope to those in need. Sure, we ran into a few exceptions, but 99 percent of the people's personalities and actions proved to outweigh the bad and stand out as the greatest part of the trip."



Visit www.mopedcountry.com to donate, read travel blogs, and view pictures

MANIFEST MOPED DESTINY

For the riders in Moped Country, a group started by Girard, Corkrum, and Sands (a 2007 graduate of the Hallmark Institute of Photography in Turner Falls, Massachusetts), the inspiration to take to the roads less traveled was personal, historical, and quite spontaneous. “[Cancer] really hits close to home for all of us,” Girard says, “because every one of us on this trip has a family member who’s been affected by cancer.” The idea to help fight cancer aboard a moped, however, struck him out of the blue at 2:00 one fall morning in 2006. When Professor Tim Brookes shared with Girard and Corkrum the story of Horatio Jackson, who became the first man to take an automotive road trip across the continental United States, in 1903, the journey took on a new layer of meaning. “Horatio’s story is amazing,” Corkrum says. “He gave birth to the American road trip.”



Soon after departing from San Francisco on July 5, the dramatic differences between car and moped transit became apparent. “People shoot ahead past me while I go at a slower speed,” Girard reported on the group’s Web site near the start of the journey. “But I get to look at the view for so much longer. I feel lucky.”

The team members enjoyed the leisurely pace, which allowed them to see the sights and meet people along the way. “Sometimes we’ll go 100 miles [out of the way] to see a site or to see someone’s family,” Girard reported. “On the road, sometimes people give us donations. We were in Ketchum,



Idaho, and got put up by a wonderful family who ended up donating.”

Girard and Corkrum, both Broadcasting majors at Champlain, saw clear connections between their education in class and out on the nation’s byways. “What we’re doing right now is extremely relevant to our major,” Girard noted. “We have TV spots. I continuously write stuff down. I’m definitely going to make a film and edit it down, and I plan to write a book, just to show people and to have.”

Through letters, donations through the team’s Web site, and kickoff and welcome back parties, Moped Country continues to gather donations, which will be made to the American Cancer Society and the S.D. Ireland Cancer Research Fund. In addition to being more environmentally friendly than a car trip and richer in scenery and personal encounters, the experience has moved Girard to share it with other Champlainers at campus presentations down the road. “What I’ve learned at school has transferred into real life,” he says. “I have millions of stories to tell.”

Retrace the journey of Moped Country at www.mopedcountry.com with travel blogs, video and media clips, and ways to donate money in the fight against cancer. 🚲