



POSITIVE TRACTION

Volume 4: November 2006

MEET THE NEW POSITIVE PEDALERS BOARD!

In August the Positive Pedalers Board dramatically increased in size and geographic reach, expanding from 8 to 15 members: 7 from Southern California, 7 from Northern California, and 1 in Portland, Oregon. The expansion was all in Southern California, to reflect the true demographics of PosPeds. One member moved from San Francisco to Portland and stayed on the Board. The new members will bring a dynamic new voice and outlook to the Board, the unique perspective of Southern California, and give us much-needed manpower to serve the needs of Positive Pedalers.

If you want to contact one of the Board members, go to the website under "Contact Us," or we have provided their email addresses at the end of their bios. Here are photos and bios of the new (and continuing) PosPed Board members:

NATHAN MEYNARD, Tustin (Orange County)

Nathan is honored to be a member of this dedicated group of men that are the voice and positive force of the HIV community. As a first time participant in ALC4 and a Training Ride Leader with Team OC (Orange County) Nathan told the world his personal story of HIV on the LOGO TV's "The Ride" documentary. A proud POS PED participant of ALC5, Nathan rode with a motto of "We All Have AIDS if One of Us Does" and a new mantra "Not Another 25 Years".

Nathan is committed to bring a POSITIVE outlook on the face of the HIV community.

nathan.menard@sbcglobal.net



JR BILLINGS, West Hollywood

J.R. tested positive in October 2005, a month after registering for ALC 5. Because of the strength of the support network he had through HIV+ groups and friends, he decided to ride with the Positive Pedalers for ALC5 in June 2006. Shortly after that J.R. joined the board of the Positive Pedalers to promote awareness of the group in Southern California. He hopes to bring that strength and support he received to other HIV+ cyclist and athletes that may be struggling and help them to "shed the shame" of their own disease.

writeme@jrbillings.com

BRENDAN PATRICK, West Hollywood

Brendan, a Positive Pedaler since 2004, has participated in six AIDS Lifecycle and California AIDS Rides. Known for his outlandish helmet, Brendan is a highly visible member of the Ride community and is tremendously excited about his new role on the Positive Pedalers board. brendan@brendanpatrick.com



ROSS PAPISH, Los Angeles (Silverlake)

I first rode in the European AIDS Vaccine Bike ride in 2001. What better cause than to create a vaccine for the many negative people in the world. ALC2 was an empowering experience and when I first saw the power of Positive Pedalers. After sero-converting I realized how lucky I am to have support and resources to take care of my health. So I continue to ride to help others who may not have those resources, to educate myself and others, and to be a proud member of Positive Pedalers. rosspapish@aol.com

PAUL SERCHIA, Studio City (Los Angeles)

Paul joined the PosPeds Board in August 2006. "After far too many years wondering whether I could successfully complete the ride and raise funds, I signed up for AIDS/LifeCycle 5 and had the time of my life!" Paul said. "I want to do all I can to bring more HIV-positive men and women to ALC." Paul lives in Los Angeles and has been living with HIV for 15 years.

pserschia@sbcglobal.net





TRENT MAGGARD, West Hollywood

Having tested positive in August 2001, I registered as a cyclist for the inaugural AIDS/Lifecycle event to take place May 2002. While I had been an athlete for most of my life, I hadn't ridden a bike since I was a kid. After ALC1, I was hooked; cycling quickly became my passion. I joined Positive Pedalers on ALC5 and look forward to sharing my cycling passion with my HIV+ brothers and sisters while continuing to show the world the positive face of HIV. tmaggard@jfsla.org

SCOTT CAMPBELL, Los Angeles

Scott joined the Board in 2005 and has participated in three ALC rides--twice as a rider and once as a roadie. He was rider #6003 for ALC5. Scott also has been a spokesmodel for the "HIV STOPS WITH ME" campaign for the last four years in both San Francisco and Los Angeles. Scambro16@aol.com



The next 3 are New Northern California Board Members:



BEAU THOMSON, San Francisco

I was motivated to get involved with ALC5 when I lost my partner Rober Hale. Now I consider this the best gift Robert ever gave me, because I'm a part of an organization that has changed my life. This year I became a training ride leader and thrilled to be participating in ALC6. I'm honored to be a member of the board of Positive Pedalers. This is the gift that keeps on giving ... and now I get to give back. mwtbeau@hotmail.com

NEEL EARGOOD, San Francisco

I was a fat, gay kid who grew-up in a small Kentucky town. If you had told me that one day I would embark on a bike ride from SF to LA (ALC4), and turn around and do it again the next year (ALC5), I'd have blankly stared at you in disbelief and then asked if you had any Ho-Ho's. But that's at least part of what life's about- "over-coming." The work of the PosPeds to help each other overcome the trials of living with HIV and to help Society overcome their fears and stigmas about HIV is work of which I am very honored to be a part. Both HIV and cycling have changed my life significantly, and I hope working with the Board of the PosPeds, participating in the ALC rides and our other rides, and just wearing my PosPeds t-shirts in everyday life can help change people's lives and minds for the better. neargood@neargood.com



GABRIEL ROCHA, San Francisco

Born and raised in Mexico City and now a resident of SF for the past 6 years, Gabriel became a PosPed member while participating in ALC 3 and became a PosPed Board member in 2004. Gabriel has also participated on ALC 4 & 5. "The first time I heard about the AIDS ride was while I was in the hospital in the year 2000. My dear friend Don did the ride that year. He called me at the end of every day during the ride. His phone calls filled me with hope and strength. He made me feel like he was doing the ride just for me. Now, I want to ride so that I can help those people who need help, like I did. Doing the AIDS/LifeCycle is my way of giving a little bit back for all that I got (mi granito de arena). I am so proud to be part of Positive Pedalers, to be a member among so many inspiring and outstanding people is a real honor. gabo291969@yahoo.com

JOHN FASESKY, San Francisco

I joined the Board in the fall of 2005. After not riding a bicycle for 25 years, I rode in AIDS/LifeCycle 3, 4 and 5 as a Positive Pedaler, and have volunteered as an AIDS/LifeCycle Training Ride Leader for three training seasons. John is Co-Chair & Treasurer. jfase@aol.com





PETER LAVOIE, Oakland

Peter's first ride was ALC4, and he joined the board in the fall. "It's been amazing to be involved in this event that helps to reduce the stigma of HIV and promotes the possibility of living a vital life. Working (and riding) with the PosPeds is a good way to spread the word and spread the love. Come join us!!" Peter is Co-Chair with John.

pospedspeter1@yahoo.com

DALE FREEMAN, San Francisco

I tested positive in 1987. I took up cycling in 1993 shortly after my wife died of HIV-related causes. I rode my first AIDS Ride in 1998, and joined the Positive Pedaler Board the following year. Positive Pedalers, like the disease that brings us together, has gone through many changes over the years, but has always remained central to my personal struggle with HIV. I'll soon be leaving the Board, but expect to remain involved with this very valuable organization. dcflaw@pacbell.net



WILFREDO ORTIZ, San Francisco

Wilfredo has been on the Board since 1997 and was a Co-Chair for the last 4 years. In the last 12 years, he's participated in 18 AIDS fundraising rides in 14 States, raising \$90,000, 11 in California supporting the San Francisco AIDS Foundation.

wortiz8485@aol.com

DAVID DUNCAN, Portland, Oregon

David has served on the Board since 2001 and was Co-Chair with Wilfredo for the last 4 years. Along with Scott, he is a spokesmodel for the "HIV STOPS WITH ME" campaign in San Francisco, completed his 9th ride this year and as of December will be relocated to Portland, Oregon. David hopes to continue his training ride leader duties in Portland for ALC 6, though he will be a Roadie for the first time! duncanowens@gmail.com



Would you like a Jersey for the coming year?

The new year will soon be upon us and we will be placing an ORDER for new jerseys in the near future (yes, there is a long lead time). We would like to determine the interest for a new jersey early.

AND for our many members who do not do AIDS/LifeCycle and participate in other rides or who just want a PosPed jersey, we are proposing a jersey WITHOUT the California-based sponsors. So on the backside of the jersey, at the bottom, you would NOT see the logos pictured below.

So please respond back to us SOON if you'd like either the AIDS/LifeCycle jersey (similar to the one pictured below) or the generic PosPed jersey. This way we can get a more accurate picture of the demand for the jerseys and can order enough! Send your response back to duncanowens@gmail.com.





PosPeds In PERSON

*From now on, each month we will feature a story (or two) about our fello PosPeds, in California, across the country, or around the world. This month we feature **James Ferguson**, from Southern California.*

On June 3, 2007 James Ferguson will join thousands of others AIDS/LifeCycle participants in San Francisco and begin a 545-mile trek to Los Angeles. The road he will follow next spring will be much different than the road the 29-year-old Laguna Beach resident was on a little more than one year ago.

Then a graduate student at San Diego State University and beginning a promising career in theatrical art design, James met up with some friends at a party and was given an opportunity to try crystal methamphetamine for the first time.

Crystal didn't frighten him. James had no trouble separating use of other recreational drugs, such as pot and ecstasy, from his studies and work. "It was never an issue," James said of his occasional drug use. "I just did it as a weekend thing. On Mondays, I would go back to school or work and it was fine." But partying on crystal meth, James learned, was

far more potent and far more difficult to isolate to weekends. Once James learned how great crystal made him feel, all he wanted to do was use, and have sex. "I didn't care about my art, my family or friends or anything," James said. "My pleasure was all I cared about."

Pleasure was not the only feeling that crystal gave James. The drug also gave him a sense of confidence, and helped him conquer feelings of inadequacy he had about the quality of his art. "When I used," James said, "I didn't have that feeling. So I used a lot. I used every day."

James didn't realize it at the time, but he was at risk of losing everything he had.

"Crystal is a thief," James explained. "It'll take everything from you. It'll take your money, your family and your health, if you let it. Crystal takes and takes and takes and takes and takes. It's nasty. It's the worst thing that anyone could ever do." After James pushed his family members and non-partying friends out of his life to make room for his addiction to crystal, his family realized that something was wrong. And they fought to get James back.

What happened then, James said, was like a movie. James was angry that his family was interfering with his desire to stay high, and he became someone that he didn't recognize. His family attempted an intervention—even breaking into his apartment at one point—but James refused to let them help him. He fled, and spent the next few weeks ricocheting around San Diego and staying high. "I knew that once I ran out of money, I'd be calling my family and having them to take me to rehab," James said. "And that's exactly what I did."

James' relationship with crystal ended while in rehabilitation. But a new phase of his life began. When medical tests were performed on James while he was in rehab, he learned that he was HIV-positive. "I thought I would never get HIV," James stated. "I was always careful. And I thought that if I did get HIV, that there are plenty of drugs out there and I'll be fine. There was no sense of urgency. If I became positive, it was like, eh! The pharmaceutical companies will take care of it."

Time in rehab forced James to examine how he had been living his life, and how he must choose between turning things around or continuing on his path to self-destruction.

"I realized I had done a lot of damage to myself, to my family, to society as a whole, to the gay community. I was not a good person at all. And I realized that there was a lot of damage that needed to be repaired."

As James was putting the pieces of his life back together last summer, a fellow former undergrad was talking enthusiastically about his first experience participating in AIDS/LifeCycle. "He wouldn't stop talking about it," James said. "It got kind of annoying! But he also got me interested in AIDS/LifeCycle and before I knew it I was at the reunion party in September and I was signing up."

Before signing up for AIDS/LifeCycle and accepting a used bicycle from his stepfather, the last time that James was on a bike was when he was in high school. "So, yeah, I'm scared," the new ALC participant said. "It's 545 miles! I never would have thought of attempting that. But since there's no pressure to 'win,' it's not as daunting as it would be, or as it could be. You're riding through California, basically, for a good cause."

James will be training with members of Positive Pedalers. He believes that AIDS/LifeCycle has a very important message to get out to the community. Young people do not perceive HIV as a threat. He certainly did not, not until he got sober. And until he arrived at that realization, James said that he caused a lot of pain for himself, and for others.

"So I'm doing the ride. I'm hoping that some of that damage will be made up."