



December 2008  
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## World AIDS Day With Brian Hodes: Up Front and Personal

It starts with a click, your feet are fastened into the pedals, that are connected to a rhythm but not just any rhythm-it is the rhythm of our hearts, beating as one. Before your hands grip the smooth rubber handlebars, you give one last adjustment to your jersey-the one that says "I have a message". All it takes is a push and one last breath before the tension is gone, and the soothing serenity of sweet freedom consumes every cell in my body. This is what *he* rides for; it is what *we* ride for. His name is Brian, and he is by no means what one could consider a novice cyclist. Eight years ago after being challenged to ride AIDS Life Cycle; he accepted the challenge with absolute enthusiasm. Riding to Brian, is his sanity and his freedom. The open road paves the way for reflection, and gives him the empowerment to remain sober. Brian is in his 16<sup>th</sup> year of sobriety.



In 2007 Brian decided to honor Caleb Glover on World AIDS Day. Caleb, a then two year old little boy from Alabama is HIV positive. Caleb and his parents were vacationing at a recreational park, when a staff member

discovered little Caleb was HIV positive. At only two years old, Caleb was denied access to the park pool. When Brian saw the story on *Good Morning America* his heart was torn to pieces. "How could this be happening in our day and age, and in our country?" Brian thought. Brian set out to make a difference in this little boy's life by letting him know he is whole-heartedly loved, accepted and welcome. During the AIDS 27<sup>th</sup> Anniversary ride, Caleb and his family were flown in from Alabama for a few specially planned activities which included, a Beverly Hills style BBQ and pool party at the home of Chris Spencer, along with a full day of fun at The Disneyland Theme Park. Brian also arranged for Caleb and his mother to attend last years closing ceremony for AIDS Life Cycle and a star-studded event hosted by the Elizabeth Glaser Pediatric AIDS Foundation.

**Last** year Brian partnered up with the Until There's a Cure Foundation and supports their efforts to eradicate and find a vaccine for HIV/AIDS through the sale of The Bracelet: the signature product of Until There's A Cure, has been a symbol of hope in the face of HIV/AIDS. Since 1993, the Foundation has granted over 9 million dollars to fight the pandemic - with great successes along the way: [www.together.until.org](http://www.together.until.org). Until There's a Cure Foundation is also instrumental in funding the new International AIDS Vaccine Institute: [www.aivi.org](http://www.aivi.org).



**This** year Brian organized the 2<sup>nd</sup> annual World AIDS Day (WAD) ride and event. Starting out Sunday, November 30 at Beverly Hills High School in Beverly Hills, over 150 cyclists embarked upon this remarkable event. It was chilly but the energy was alive and warm. In the grass there lay an enormous red ribbon, as well as a portion of the AIDS Memorial Quilt. As participants gathered around to view the quilt it was a solemn reminder as to why they had assembled there on that very day. AIDS has taken the lives of friends and loved ones for nearly 28 years. The ride, 28 miles down to the ocean coast, included a moment of silence and a wonderful prayer. One by one each participant paid tribute to an individual that has been lost their battle to AIDS; it was a saddening reminder of the past, and yet it is our motivation to keep fighting against AIDS.

**Brian** did not stop with the 28 mile ride. Later on that afternoon, Brian headed back to Beverly Hills High School track to set up for a 24 hours

AIDS ride awareness event. As Brian stated, "I wanted to do something different to raise awareness. After asking myself who is our target audience that we need to reach out to? Immediately I thought of high school students because they are newly sexually aware". We decided to begin reaching out to tomorrows leaders, at Beverly Hill High School.



The principal was receptive and referred Brian to the Service Learning Classes that were introducing the topic of HIV/AIDS. The entire school showed immense enthusiasm for the idea. The Graphic Arts classes designed posters, the Media department shot a video production on the topic, and Service Learning students cut 2500 red ribbons to distribute for every student to wear on behalf of those who have contracted the HIV/AIDS virus. Along with the schools assistance, Brian had an unbelievable support group - Jen Moore (who last year rode her first ALC), PosPeds, the entire UTACVELO Team and the list could go on.

Brian arranged for two PosPeds speakers to address the students during two assemblies. The kids heard first hand what it is like to live with HIV, and the questions they asked were nothing but amazing. They were not only concerned about how someone can contract the disease but also about the well being of the speakers. We could not have asked for a more inspiring group of young adults, than the ones at Beverly Hills High School. "Our goal is to get the word out there and make individuals more aware, our job is an ongoing process. There is more work, more speeches, more schools; but it was an amazingly inspirational start and such a rewarding journey."



Brian rode, around and around and around the track - for 24 hours - 205.36 miles - over 800 laps. According to Brian, "The first few hours were great, absolutely painless. Then fatigue starts to set in, but seeing new volunteers and supporters come up and ride along side me and support me kept me going. We had a massage team there, food was brought, and it was incredible. I almost started falling asleep on the bike about 2 or 3 o'clock in the morning. It was the volunteers and supporters that really kept me going. The neat thing was 3 o'clock in the afternoon, 21 hours into the ride, a student came

running down to the field with an e-mail from a viewer from KTLA coverage who had seen the panel from the AIDS quilt. It was her husbands' panel; he had lost his life to AIDS several years prior. She was ecstatic and so grateful that her husband is still honored and remembered. Two times during the ride I was moved to tears. That was one! The other was listening to the kids."

**When** we get off of our bikes at the end of a long ride we know in our hearts that we ride to spread the message about HIV/AIDS. The rhythm as our hearts beat as one, and motivates our every revolution. We are eternally blessed to have Brian Hodes as a positive supporter. He asks of us -Positive Peddlers - to share his vision for growth education, and awareness.

*In addition, Brian organized numerous ride around the United States and the world.*

- Shirley Jaglowski



***Happy Holiday***

**We hope that you and your family have a safe, warm, and fun-filled Holiday season.**

***From your PosPeds Family***