

Odyssey of the Heart

Chris Figureida is not your average 30-year-old welder. In April of 2007, he rode a bicycle across America to raise kids' awareness about heart disease. *Cycle for Heart* has been so successful that come this Fall, he will attempt his 5th cross country ride.

Chris is a dedicated volunteer for the American Heart Association and uses his physical prowess to help kids make healthy lifestyle choices. During his cross-country bicycle treks, he visited schools, elected officials, and government offices in 29 states from California to Maine; speaking about healthy and active lifestyles and explaining why physical activity is important. The next *Cycle for Heart* will cross the country in a different direction -- from Fort Kent Maine to Neah Bay Washington.



Who better to bicycle across America touting an active lifestyle than a would-be Indiana Jones whose passport stamps exceed his age? Physical activity is something that was always part of Chris' life growing up in Ventura, California. The 30-year-old's adventuresome spirit has led him to distant places – riding elephants in Thailand; hiking the Inca Trail to Machu Pichu, Peru; watching the northern lights in Sweden; soloing the 22841 foot peak of Mt. Aconcagua; and riding his bicycle 1,800 miles from Canada to Mexico in 21 days.

“I am very fortunate that healthy habits are something I grew up with,” Chris says, “I know that’s not the case for many kids.” He decided to put his good health to work educating others about healthy lifestyle choices.

Chris notes, “It seemed like a bike trek would be a good way to draw attention to the importance of physical activity in reversing the trend of childhood obesity.” He went to work putting together the inaugural *Cycle for Heart*, which was a two-month long, 3,746-mile trip from Ventura, California to Lubec, Maine. He secured sponsors and mapped out visits to schools, state capitals, and city halls along the way.



In addition to promoting the American Heart Association, which seeks to build healthier lives free of cardiovascular diseases and stroke, *Cycle for Heart* seeks to promote Rotary International and the Polio Plus Program. During his next ride, and on top of his meeting with schools and state officials, Chris will be speaking to Rotary Clubs across the nation to raise funds for the fight against polio.

To find out more about Chris and Cycle for Heart, please visit
www.cycleforheart.org
www.youtube.com/cycleforheart