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### **SUMMER 201**7

# **Cycling for the ages**

#### By Amanda Arnold

D ain or shine, Donna King is out **I** hitting the pavement with her trusty bicycle. Not even shoulder surgery will stop her in her tracks for too long. From spring until late fall or early winter, she sets out on at least three 75-mile treks every week.

King, 59, said cycling in the Colorado National Monument is her favorite route. She begins her usual ride in Orchard Mesa and sets off on the 16 miles to the Fruita Welcome Center, and then up to the Visitor Center at Colorado National Monument. From there, she continues to the Cold Shivers overlook. While most cyclists would continue down the hill and exit the Monument at the east entrance, King turns right back around and leaves from the west entrance.

Once a month, she will take on a "century ride," traveling 100 miles to locations such as Reeder Mesa in Whitewater, Glenwood Springs, Aspen, Telluride, and Death Valley, where she recently rode 210 miles in three days.

When she became serious about cycling three years ago, she started by riding in the Monument area on a 35-pound bicycle.

"It took me two-and-a-half hours to climb up from the west entrance

are through the Colorado National Monument.

to the Visitor Center," King confessed, adding that she stopped a lot.

It wasn't long before she bought a lightweight bike and committed to riding it three times a week. After about a month. she could make it to the Visitor Center without stopping. Now she loves cycling

so much that she rarely takes her car for commutes around town.

#### Bike for the Cure

Marie Nemec, 73, and Charlotte Reicks, 81, are no strangers to cycling long distances. Since 1999, they have embarked on an annual cross-country ride to raise funds for Huntington's disease (HD) and have raised \$700,000 to date. This year, they are preparing to ride 600 miles from Pleasant Hill, Missouri to Schaumburg, Illinois for the 32nd annual Huntington's Disease Society of America (HDSA) conven tion.

Huntington's disease (HD) is a debilitating genetic disorder that breaks down nerve cells in the brain, gradually deteriorating one's mental and physical abilities. Nemec learned about HD in 1997



while attending the HDSA convention in Denver with a friend, whose husband inherited the disease.

Referring to those suffering from HD, Nemec said, "Their plight tugged at my heartstrings because they were so ill by no fault of their own. They didn't live an unhealthy lifestyle-it was just bad flip of the coin. I felt I had to do something to help. This ride evolved from that."

Nemec and Reicks met through a mutual friend in 1998. A brazen road warrior for several years before riding for Bike for the Cure, Reicks rode for other charities, such as Make a Wish Foundation, Habitat for Humanity and the American Bible Society.

The next year, Nemec, Reicks and another friend set out on their first Bike for the Cure, which started in Santa Monica, California and ended



Left: Marie Nemec and Charlotte Reicks are preparing for their 600-mile journey to the HDSA convention in Illinois. **Top:** Sam Marutzky, left, said bicycling is popular because almost anvone can do it.

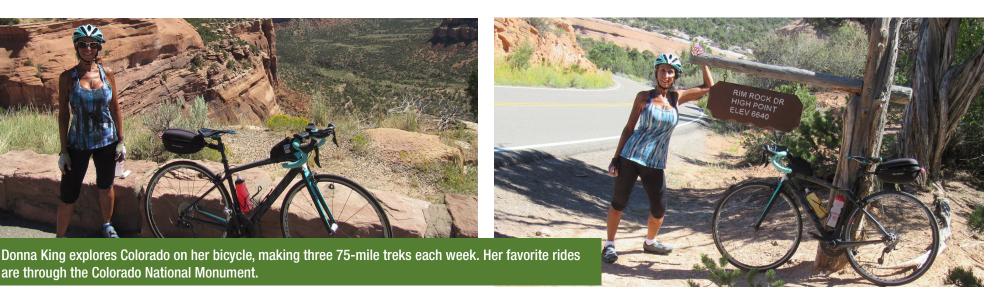
in Arlington, Virginia. Since then, many cyclists have taken part in the ride—some have completed the entire trek alongside Nemec and Reicks, while others only ride certain legs. Those involved plan different routes every year, and thanks to the kindness of churches across the country, riders have a soft bed to sleep on at the end of the day.

#### The rules of the road

Long-time cyclist Sam Marutzky said that bicycling is popular because almost anyone can do it.

"It's easy on your joints, unlike running...and you can do it longer than other exercises," he said.

Cycling is a rewarding activity, and even more so when riders consider their safety. Having advocated for bicycle safety for several years, King will be one of the first of the





bicycle ambassadors in the Colorado National Monument.

This new program brings in volunteers on bicycles to help other zone-therefore, it's just as importcyclists and motorists enjoy the ant to ride as comfortably as possi-Colorado National Monument safely. ble. Marutzky, who makes several cen-Bicycle ambassadors will provide information regarding safety and tury rides throughout the year but road conditions to all visitors. King said it's important to know solo through the Colorado National the rules of the road no matter Monument, recommended wearing where you are. Cyclists should a jersey that wicks sweat, gloves know the hand signals, and should and comfortable shoes, and buying wear a helmet that fits properly. the right bike. King recommends wearing a mirror "If you're starting out and you're on the helmet to reflect car lights, older, you're better to start with a mountain bike," he said. helping alert drivers to a rider's presence on the road. While mountain biking is more "Always have [front and rear] difficult, the upright stance is easier lights, whether you're in Colorado on the body than hunching over National Monument or not," she a road bike. It's also best to find a said. "I always have them on. bike that's lightweight and easy You should also have a light that to ride.

flashes."

Nemec suggested having an odometer, especially for long-distance rides, as some areas lack mile

LARGE SELECTION OF TOPICALS,

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markers. Reicks said long rides can be hard physically and mentally because you're out of your comfort

spends most of his weekends riding

Nemec, who uses a touring bike on her epic rides, suggested considering a three-wheeled bike or an upright incumbent bike.



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# Happy trails!

Wish Charlotte, Marie and their companions a safe ride at a kickoff breakfast for their upcoming ride on June 3 from 8:30-10 a.m at Sherwood Park in Grand Junction.

You can show further support by donating to their cause, purchasing a ride T-shirt, or by organizing a fundraising or awareness event with family, friends, your church or social group.

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During the ride, both ladies write messages recounting the highlights and progress of each day. To subscribe to Marie's emails, email ronnemec@gmail.com. To subscribe to Charlotte's emails, email careicks@gmail.com.

To purchase ride T-shirts or for information on how to organize an event, visit www.bikeforthecure.org or email ronnemec@gmail.com. Donations can be made at www.hdsa.org/bikeforthecure.

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