

Cycling for the ages

By Amanda Arnold

Rain or shine, Donna King is out 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

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 Nemeč, 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) convention.

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.

Nemeč learned about HD in 1997



Left: Marie Nemeč 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 anyone can do it.

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

Referring to those suffering from HD, Nemeč 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."

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

in Arlington, Virginia. Since then, many cyclists have taken part in the ride—some have completed the entire trek alongside Nemeč 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 cyclists and motorists enjoy the Colorado National Monument safely. Bicycle ambassadors will provide information regarding safety and road conditions to all visitors.

King said it's important to know the rules of the road no matter where you are. Cyclists should know the hand signals, and should wear a helmet that fits properly. King recommends wearing a mirror on the helmet to reflect car lights, helping alert drivers to a rider's presence on the road.

"Always have [front and rear] lights, whether you're in Colorado National Monument or not," she said. "I always have them on. You should also have a light that flashes."

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

markers. Reicks said long rides can be hard physically and mentally because you're out of your comfort zone—therefore, it's just as important to ride as comfortably as possible.

Marutzky, who makes several century rides throughout the year but spends most of his weekends riding solo through the Colorado National Monument, recommended wearing a jersey that wicks sweat, gloves and comfortable shoes, and buying the right bike.

"If you're starting out and you're older, you're better to start with a mountain bike," he said.

While mountain biking is more difficult, the upright stance is easier on the body than hunching over a road bike. It's also best to find a bike that's lightweight and easy to ride.

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

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.

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.bikefortheure.org or email ronnemec@gmail.com. Donations can be made at www.hdsa.org/bikefortheure.



Donna King explores Colorado on her bicycle, making three 75-mile treks each week. Her favorite rides are through the Colorado National Monument.



High Q
Silt, CO

EXPERIENCE THE DIFFERENCE OF
100% ORGANIC TOP SHELF & PREMIUM MARIJUANA

— * —

EVERY SUNDAY
SENIORS AND VETERANS RECEIVE 20% OFF!
(15% OFF EVERY OTHER DAY)

LARGE SELECTION OF TOPICALS, EDIBLES & CBD PRODUCTS

730 MAIN STREET SILT, CO • 844-420-DANK(3265) • www.HighQSilt.com

It's My Time ... to push my limits!

Join today and get the
SUMMER FOR FREE!

Fitness just for you!

- Easy Does It Yoga
- Zumba Gold
- Sweat & Sculpt
- Water Classes
- Silver & Fit
- Silver Sneakers preferred provider

Crossroads Fitness

www.crossroadsfitness.com

Downtown: 225 N. 5th St., #18 (Alpine Bank Bldg) 241-7800
Airport: 2768 Compass Drive (off Horizon Drive) 242-8746