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Pedal power: Bicycle ministry to ride, raise and reach

April 29, 2008 | Tara Maxwell

Liberty University alumna Judy Bowman knows when God closes one door He opens another.

When she was laid off from her job as assistant dean of Liberty's distance learning program in 1990 she didn't despair — she found her calling on a bicycle.

Bowman, who holds a world record for riding 3,000 miles on a stationary bike in seven days, is the founder of Lynchburg, Va.-based WHEEL POWER Christian Cyclists. Wheel Power is an evangelistic ministry spreading the Gospel throughout America and around the world.

Now, 18 years and 1.8 million miles later, WHEEL POWER is partnering with Liberty University to spread the word of God, gain exposure for the school and raise money for campus development including the Towns/Alumni Ministry Training Center and Liberty's endowment through missions bicycle trips across America.

The 2008-09 campaign, Ride, Raise and Reach, includes a ride from Portland, Maine, to Orland, Fla., and a ride from Los Angeles, Calif., to Lynchburg, Va.

“God gave me a vision to ride across the United States and He gave me the gift of evangelism, which has been exciting,” Bowman said.

Bowman said her goal is to encourage and train Christians to talk to anyone, anytime, anyplace about Jesus. She stays true to her mission wherever she goes, even in line at the post office.

“We are pedaling and proclaiming the truth to give people freedom,” she said.

Bowman, who has made 14 coast-to-coast rides, operates WHEEL POWER alongside her son Steve, an LU alumnus, and his wife, Heather. Steve and Heather were married by the late Dr. Jerry Falwell Sr. in 1993.

WHEEL POWER has been going strong for 16 years, although Bowman has been leading rides for more than 20 years.

During the trips, riders spend nights at churches where they receive meals, showers and a place for their air mattresses. Bowman said she plans to connect Liberty alumni with each other through the rides and through five to seven rallies along the route. Rallies will feature WHEEL POWER riders and Liberty University representatives meeting members of the communities they visit.

“We’re very bright on the road, we’re very visible,” Bowman said of WHEEL POWER’s signature neon yellow and red, white and blue jerseys. “We want to make an impact and help in recruiting. People will find out about Liberty and hear about it from a little different perspective.”

Upcoming rides:

Ride, Raise and Reach participants can ride a few miles, a few days or for an entire trip. The ministry recognizes that many people will not be able to ride, but they may support the riders in prayer and by making a financial donation to benefit Liberty University’s endowment program or the Towns/Alumni Ministry Training Center.

Upcoming rides include Portland, Maine, to Orlando, Fla., Sept. 16-Oct. 21, 2008, and Los Angeles, Calif., to Lynchburg, Va., March 14.-May 8, 2009.

Want to sign up or get more information? Check out www.wheelpower.org, e-mail trips@wheelpower.org, or call (434) 385-5839.