

Georgetown Students Plan Bike Trip To Fight Pediatric AIDS

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GEORGETOWN, Md. (TMS) -- There is ambition, and then there is ambition.

The latter type might include plans involving numbers such as \$100,000, 3,000 miles and a handful of Georgetown University students with big dreams.

It's the kind of ambition that serves as the backbone of "It's For the Kids," a non-profit organization dreamed up by Georgetown senior Danielle Hurley and juniors Thor Cheston and Stephen Sobhani. The three had been tossing around the idea of conducting a cross-country bike ride when they were inspired to go the distance for the benefit of children -- specifically like those they'd met while volunteering in the pediatric AIDS wing of Georgetown University Hospital.

"We were moved by the tragedy and inspiration of volunteering there, and we learned so much," Sobhani said.

The ultimate goal of the endeavor is to raise a minimum of \$100,000 to sponsor 15 riders as they pedal from San Francisco to Washington D.C., this summer from June 1 to July 4. Organizers want to donate 75 percent of the money raised to pediatric AIDS charities and the remaining 25 percent to the Georgetown hospital's pediatric department.

"It was an easy decision to become involved with this project," said Mike Wadsworth, a Georgetown junior and member of the organization's board. "I haven't done enough [charity work] in my life, and this is a great way to start."

The student organizers say preparations for the bike ride itself almost seem like the easy part, compared to everything else that has to get done ahead of time. The group is constantly working on new ways to both raise awareness of the trip and money for it.

To get the funds, student organizers are planning a charity dinner and auction with hopes of getting renowned AIDS activists to attend. The students have also set up a Web site about the organization -- www.itsforthekids.org -- that contains the latest news about the trip and other fundraising efforts, such as local art exhibits and festivities for and about children with AIDS. So far, they've gotten some important attention. A delegation from It's For the Kids met with Daniel Montoya, who heads the White House's office of international AIDS policy, in July.

In organizing It's For the Kids, Sobhani made sure to construct a core of supporters that not only includes students but also doctors who can provide medical information and advice on the best ways to raise and spend donations.

"What I find most impressive about this group is that they have no direct association with AIDS, such as having a relative who suffers from it," said Dr. Charlotte Morel, head of the pediatric epidemiology department at Georgetown University Hospital. "They were simply inspired by what they saw in the hospital."

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