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Siblings biked 3K miles in Race Across America

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Countless Americans take journeys across the country, stopping all across the nation to take in the sights presented to them in various states. However, Karl Wianecki and Denise Stone were determined to make their trek across the U.S. as fast as their bikes would take them.

Wianecki, who is from the Convent Station section of Morristown, and his sister Stone, of Long Valley, are two racers on the All Wheels 4 Fibromyalgia cycling team that participated in the 2009 Race Across America. The other two racers are Dave Stauffer (Easton, Pa.) and Gernot Wolfram (Eastry, United Kingdom), plus about a dozen crew members.

The Race Across America is a 3,000 mile bike race in which teams race from Oceanside, Calif., to Annapolis, Md.

Each team's objective is to complete the coast-to-coast race in the fastest time for their respective category. The All Wheels 4 Fibromyalgia team was in the four-person mixed team category, and successfully traversed the country on their Bianchi bikes in six days, 11 hours, and 38 minutes, finishing in first place in their category.

The team partnered with the National Fibromyalgia Association and other sponsors to raise awareness for fibromyalgia. Fibromyalgia is a syndrome that is characterized by chronic pain in the muscles of soft tissue surrounding the joints, fatigue, and tenderness at specific sites in the body. The team was able to raise roughly \$60,000 in support of the fight against fibromyalgia.

Crew member Deb Feather suffers from fibromyalgia, so the opportunity for the team to partner with the NFA to raise awareness for the syndrome was important to the entire group.

"I knew at least two people who suffered from it, so I was familiar with the syndrome," Wianecki said. "Denise came up with the idea because one of her college roommates suffered from it. It was personal for us."

The 2009 event was Wianecki's first, but he is no stranger to the physical challenges of cycling. He started biking two years ago and has also participated in triathlons where he could hone his skills.

It was his sister Denise who inspired him to saddle up and join the team for this year's ride.

"I tracked my sister when she was in the race last year and I became very interested in it," Wianecki said. "It motivated me to want to be a part of it."

Stone is a cycling veteran, who rode for Team Cycle Smart in the 2008 Race Across America. She started cycling about five years ago after seeing the sport on television. Stone also credits her coach, Martha Grinnell of Dynamic Training — who is also Wianecki's trainer — for helping her develop as a cyclist.

The grind of this strenuous cross-country adventure was not something the siblings were afraid of. Instead, they relished the opportunity to challenge themselves.

"The adventure of the race was so awesome," Stone said. "It's not about you as a rider; it's about the entire team. The riding is the easy part. It is the various issues that you face along the way that create the biggest challenges."

The 2009 Race Across America created countless memories for the rookie Wianecki.

"Completing the race was an experience of a lifetime, and being able to be a part of a team that raised money and awareness for the NFA was very rewarding," Wianecki said. "The realization that I was helping other people really brought it to life for me."
