

Pedal power here & there



In Arlington, Va., AFA staff members and supporters—including AFA President Larry Spencer, far left in the second row—pedal for wounded airmen. The Alamo Chapter held a simultaneous challenge in San Antonio.



AFA volunteers on two continents raised funds for wounded airmen.

From Arlington, Va., to Agadez in the African country of Niger, volunteers pedaled in the Wounded Airman Cycling Challenge and surpassed their fund-raising goal for AFA's Airmen and Family Programs, including the Wounded Airman Program.

Riders on stationary bikes in the US—led by AFA national headquarters staff members in Arlington, Alamo Chapter members in San Antonio, and other individual and corporate supporters—raised over \$56,000 through this cycling challenge. It took place primarily at indoor cycling studios CycleBar in Arlington, Va., and CycleBar Stone Oak in Texas, where on May 20, the fund-raisers spent an hour spinning. Afterward the IT company Technica hosted a reception for the Virginia-based group.

“Our first annual Wounded Airmen Cycling Challenge exceeded all of our expectations,” commented retired Gen. Larry O. Spencer, AFA’s president. Not only did the US volunteers beat the event’s original goal of \$50,000, the cyclists in Arlington were surprised that their workout involved some lifting of weights and push-ups from the handlebars while they pedaled.

IN THE SAHEL

Meanwhile, in Africa’s Sahel—where the land transitions to the Sahara desert—US Air Force personnel building an airfield in Niger decided to organize a remote version of the cycling challenge.

Photos: Kari Volliva, MSgt. Dustin E. Lawrence

But first, they needed wheels. Led by Ramstein Chapter member MSgt. Dustin E. Lawrence, they obtained 10 mountain bikes through the air base’s services flight. Flat tires, faulty brakes, and chain defects soon sidelined half of them, however, because there were no spare parts.

By McKinnon Pearse

In Agadez, Niger, more than 100 airmen cycled a 9.5-mile circuit from sun up to sun down during a Memorial Day Cycling Challenge. Inset photo: SrA. Isis Arroyo is second from left. The white truck in the background followed behind the cyclists, carrying water.

Undeterred, airmen like SrA. Isis Arroyo of the 60th Civil Engineering Squadron, began riding on May 1 in off-duty hours, early in the morning or in the evening before the sun went down. Volunteers from the fire department to the medical flight saddled up. “Those five bikes got a lot of miles put on them,” emailed Lawrence, who is first sergeant for the 724th Expeditionary Air Base Squadron. Arroyo rode 100 miles.

On Memorial Day, the airmen held an air base bike ride, with teams of four to five riding all day. By the end of a month’s effort, they had put in more than 400 hours of riding. They were continuing fund-raising through July at <https://fundly.com/users/1513423>.

AFA has provided more than \$300,000 in direct support to wounded airmen and families since 2013. The funds have been used for adaptive sports equipment, ramps, emergency financial support, and transition assistance.

McKinnon Pearse is AFA’s communications coordinator and personally raised \$700 for this edition of the Wounded Airmen Cycling Challenge. MSgt. Dustin E. Lawrence provided additional reporting from Niger.



- Nation’s Capital Chapter
- Gen Charles A Gabriel Chapter
- Ramstein Chapter
- Alamo Chapter
- Thunderbird Chapter
- Frank Luke Chapter

