



# The Sacramento Union Est. 1851

## Seven Fathers, One Cause

### Dads Fight Childhood Cancer with Cross-Country Bike Trek



(L-R) Alec Oughton, Vander Davis, Rick St. John, Kevin Sims, Mike Love and Randy Monroe began their fundraising ride across America earlier this week. A seventh cyclist, Richard Brown, is scheduled to meet the other cyclists halfway through the trip. (Sacramento Union Photo/ Lance Armstrong)

By **LANCE ARMSTRONG**  
Sacramento Union Writer

With a single mission in mind and very little training behind them, six amateur bicyclists recently left the State Capitol grounds in hopes that their dreams would be met about 3,500 miles later.

For Alec Oughton, Randy Monroe, Rick St. John, Kevin Sims, Vander Davis and Mike Love, riding their bicycles relay-style across the entire United States is a feat that is only expected to take them about 19 days to complete. A seventh cyclist, Richard Brown of England, is scheduled to meet the other cyclists halfway through the trip.

Although none of these men are anything close to being like Lance Armstrong (not the author of this article, but instead the seven-time Tour de France winner), when it comes to cycling, their cause is much too great not to attempt to complete this ride.

With their destination of Washington  
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## Decision to Save Smelt Means Cuts for Farm Water

By **KATE CAMPBELL**  
Special Contributor to The Union

Before a packed courtroom in Fresno, a federal judge ruled Friday that state and federal water projects must change the way they operate – at least for the 2008 season – to meet Endangered Species Act requirements for a protected fish. After a grueling eight-day trial, U.S. District Court Judge Oliver Wanger announced a complex decision that experts have been pouring over to understand its full implications.

But water agencies and farm groups say the decision certainly means reduced water supplies for farmers who depend on water from the Sacramento-San Joaquin Delta.

California Farm Bureau Federation attorneys represented farmers' interests during the trial.

"This is a sad and troubling decision," said CFBF President Doug Mosebar. "It's sad that many honest, hard-working people

will suffer because our water system is broken. It's sad that our laws give more weight to fish than to people. It's troubling that we have reached this point.

"We know that endangered-species laws provide no flexibility. We know that our water system is broken. But we haven't fixed either problem. That's unacceptable."

Mosebar said the ruling will lead to "very real impacts on real people. Family farmers and their employees may be the first to suffer, but the aftershocks will also hurt small-business owners, truck drivers, packing-house workers—all the people whose jobs are tied to the farm economy in the San Joaquin Valley and Southern California."

And consumers will be affected, too, Mosebar stressed. "We have to remember what irrigation water is used for. It's used to grow food to feed our communities at an affordable price.

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## California's Uncool Energy Policy

By **THOMAS TANTON**  
Sacramento Union Columnist

After a summer with temperatures dropping into the mid-70s, the lowest in Sacramento in 130 years, the heat duly returned for Labor Day weekend. So did power outages, but these can be blamed on California's flawed energy policy as much as the heat.

In many parts of the state, the temperature hit 105 degrees Fahrenheit over the Labor Day weekend, leaving some without power and prompting a slew of power-shortages warnings from the California Independent System Operator, which oversees the state's power grid. More than 20,000 Californians were left without power, at the very time when they needed it most.

The CalISO urged customers to continue conserving electricity by setting air conditioning thermostats higher and

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A smiling Cooper Proscia rides his bike at Capitol Park. The 6-year-old San Ramon resident is among the children who could benefit from the manufacturing of a new, "cutting edge" drug that would be used to fight the aggressive childhood cancer, neuroblastoma. (Sacramento Union Photo/ Lance Armstrong)

D.C. still many miles away, the men remain strong as they share the common bond of being the fathers of children with a rare form of cancer, known as neuroblastoma.

And for this reason, the men set off from the state capitol grounds on the morning of Sept. 10, hoping to raise sufficient funds along the way to pay for the production and manufacturing of a new, "cutting edge" drug that would be used to fight this aggressive childhood cancer.

The new humanized drug, which is the invention of Dr. Nai-Kong Cheung, is considered the closest thing to a cure for neuroblastoma, which affects about 600 children per year in the United States.

The urgency of raising funds for the drug, which totals about \$3 million, falls heavily upon the families and friends of the families of children with neuroblastoma, since very little funding for this disease comes from non-profit organizations.

Realizing the potential magnitude of this fundraising drive, Monroe expressed his emotions prior to departing from Sacramento.

"It could potentially save our daughter's life and the lives of many other kids, so it means more to me than anything," Monroe said. "I've never felt more strong about doing something in my life. If we don't raise the money, there are kids that need this medicine now that could be lost. We've already lost close friends, because they don't have the right medicine."

Although none of the seven cyclists live in Sacramento, neuroblastoma has certainly made its way to the capital region.

On a local level, for example, Nick Lynch of Granite Bay was diagnosed on May 12, 2006 with the disease, which is described by the online dictionary, Dictionary.com, as "a malignant tumor of immature nerve cells that usually starts in the autonomic nervous system or adrenal gland and spreads quickly, most often affecting young children."

Nick, who was 8 years old at the time of the diagnosis, had been living an active life as a youth involved in a variety of sports, including baseball, golf, fishing and swimming.

His love for fishing, in fact, had left him in limbo regarding whether he would undertake a career as a doctor or a fisherman.

Often referred to as the "great masquerader," because its symptoms mimic other diseases, neuroblastoma first made itself known in Nick's life in the form of a stomachache and a low-grade fever.

A CT scan, however, revealed a mass in Nick's abdomen, resulting in Nick's introduction to chemotherapy, a surgery to remove a tumor and various treatments of 3F8—the current, yet not always effective monoclonal antibody, used to signal a patient's immune system to attack and kill a tumor cell.

Fortunately for Nick, although he continues to receive occasional 3F8 treatments, his status has been diagnosed as NED or "no evidence of disease" since August 2006.

But many others, who have been diagnosed with neuroblastoma, have not been as fortunate.



Nick Lynch of Granite Bay shows off a fish he caught during his reef fishing trip to Bermuda in July 2007. (Photo courtesy Ken Lynch)

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Carolyn Lynch holds up an anti-neuroblastoma T-shirt, featuring a photo of her son, Nick. (Sacramento Union Photo/ Lance Armstrong)

And for this reason, Nick, who celebrated his ninth birthday in New York on Jan. 1, is among the supporters of the seven fathers bicycle relay, which is officially known as The Loneliest Road Campaign.

Showing his appreciation for these father-bicyclists, Nick said, "Thanks for

supporting all the little kids and for trying to help them stay alive and get clean and have no cancer, so they can have a good life."

Nick's mother Carolyn, who referred to Nick as a "little trooper through it all," said that she is also very appreciative of the

seven fathers' fundraising efforts.

"I think it's wonderful that they're raising public awareness and funds," Carolyn said. "(Funding for neuroblastoma) is lagging behind leukemia, so this (campaign) is very important."

Nick's father Ken added that although he hopes that his son will never need the new treatment, he has a great desire that the father-cyclists will be able to secure the necessary funds for this treatment.

"I think that these guys are going to bring awareness to this (treatment) and hopefully get somebody to step up, a company, a fund, an endowment fund, somebody to step up and provide the money," Ken said.

As the campaign continues, the seven dedicated father-cyclists will strive to attract this large sum of money needed to make their dream of seeing the manufacturing of Dr. Cheung's new drug a reality.

Sims, whose daughter Sydney, 11, was diagnosed with neuroblastoma on Jan. 15, 2004, said that he is looking forward to the challenges that he will face during the fathers' cross-country journey.

"Time is of the essence and this is a great opportunity for us to do something medically speaking, besides just giving support," Sims said. "I've always been the type of person that's up to a physical challenge. If someone asks me to jump off a bridge, I say, 'How much?' So, when we were wondering how we could get the attention, raise awareness and draw in that one philanthropist, and the idea for this bicycle ride came up, I said, 'Let's do this.' But then this is for a cause that is very important to me, so if it takes me running across the country like Forrest Gump in a freakin' thong, I'll do it!"

Oughton, 34, who originally introduced the idea of taking the cross-country, fundraising trek across America, understands that although the ride will not be easy, the potential reward is much greater than the energy that the fathers will exert on the trip.

"We will have time to give our muscles a rest, since we are riding it as a relay," said Oughton, whose daughter Grace is featured on the Web site [www.savegrace.com](http://www.savegrace.com). "But I think the Rockies are no joke, nor the Sierra Nevadas or the Appalachians, so I think it's absolutely going to be a punishment. But going up the Rockies is nothing compared to chemotherapy, radiation, surgery, incubation and all this stuff that the kids (with neuroblastoma) have gone through. What we're going to do is a joke compared to that."

Sharyl Proscia of San Ramon, whose husband David worked with Contra Costa County firefighter Rich Sonsteng to help secure the relay's commencement on the capitol grounds, said that she has a special interest in The Loneliest Road Campaign, since her 6-year-old son Cooper was diagnosed with neuroblastoma on Sept. 19, 2005.

"I think that it's amazing what (the seven fathers) are doing," Sharyl said. "I think they are trying to give these kids every chance at extending their lives."

Although it has been nearly a week since the cyclists left Sacramento, a Web site, [www.loneliestroad.org](http://www.loneliestroad.org), is available for those desiring to keep track of the participants' adventures across America.

Furthermore, the Web site allows those interested in making a donation to The Loneliest Road Campaign to do so by clicking the "Donate" menu button at the top of the site's main page, then following the simple instructions.

Those who prefer to make a donation can send a check, payable to "Grace Oughton Cancer Foundation," and mail it to: Grace Oughton Cancer Foundation, Attn.: The Loneliest Road Campaign, 9962 Brook Road, Glen Allen, VA 23059.

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