



The Fuller Center Bike Adventure rides its way into Liberal Friday, July 5. The FCBA is a non-profit organization made up of dedicated volunteers that work to end poverty housing worldwide. From community to community, the Adventurers change lives by building homes of strangers who desperately need a helping hand. Courtesy photo

By GISEELLE ARREDONDO

- Leader & Times

They ride bikes, build homes and change lives.

The Fuller Center Bicycle Adventure, a movement dedicated to ending poverty housing worldwide created in 2008, passed through Liberal Friday.

Adventure rides through Liberal

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The bicyclists stayed overnight at Central Christian Church and continued on their journey Saturday morning.

As soon as the Adventurers arrived in Liberal, they saw the statues all throughout town.

“We noticed all of the Dorothy statues everywhere, and we thought it was really cool once we found out what they were,” the Bicycle Adventure leader Melissa Merrill said.

They were also glad to come across such “friendly people” who gave them “a warm welcome.”



The Adventurers travel to any community where they are invited and help is needed. FCBA has made more than 55 covenant partners all through the United States and 16 international covenant partners in foreign countries. There is no limit. They work in both rural and urban communities of any size.

Since its inaugural ride in 2009, the event has covered more than 14,900 miles through 36 states, helped renovate or repair 50 homes, and has raised more than \$680,000 for families in need of housing all over the world.

The Adventurers were previously in Oklahoma and are currently riding into Colorado where they will be joined by more Adventurers in La Junta, Colo.

The team currently consists of 16 people biking and two in the support van for a total of 18 volunteers.

“Actually, we are all volunteers, including myself,” Merrill added. “We are volunteers raising money and awareness for The Fuller Center for Housing,”

The Adventurers’ ages range from 15 to 71 and they “cover a lot of ground during the day and we have stops that are planned out ahead of time. There’s a stock trailer always ahead 20 miles,” Merrill said.

They all support each other and help each other along the way.

“If someone totals their bike, they can ride in the van,” Merrill said.

In its sixth year, its main goal still remains strong. Other specific goals for the year 2013 are to get at least 110 riders to join for multiple days, raise \$220,000 to bring a total of \$900,000 raised by FCBA, form more than 50 new church relationships, and get 2,000 members on their Facebook page.

The FCBA understands that the demand for safe, affordable housing is enormous and they believe that a locally-led and locally-driven project will have a tremendous effect, bigger than they will ever know.

According to the American Housing Survey by the U.S. Census Bureau in 2005, there are about one billion people around the world who live in defective houses. There are so many people who need safe and affordable housing but are too poor or elderly to help themselves.

In the United States, there are about 2 million people that have holes in their roofs, 3.7 million have windows broken, 2.5 million of foundations are crumbling underneath them, and at least one million live completely without plumbing facilities.

This time around, the biggest project the Adventurers have had to face was replacing a roof.

“Tearing it down and replacing it all in one day. It was quite a challenge,” Merrill said.

Anyone who is interested in helping others can sign up for a virtual tour, ride for a day, for a week or for the entire trip. Or go one step further and sponsor a rider on his or her journey.

The trip is an adventure. It's tough to answer what the best part of trip is, Merrill said, because “there's so many cool things. The group of people the trip brings together. They like cycling and helping people. It's almost like a family in the end.”