

Taking the burn so others don't have to

Students from the AAA School of Advertising are cycling from Botswana to Cape Town this month to raise money for child burn victims and to raise awareness about the dangers of burns. They are looking for additional sponsors.

Geoff Brown (21) and Tyrone Woods (24) of the AAA School of Advertising in Johannesburg have decided to cycle close on 3000 kilometres, from the border with Botswana to the southern end of South Africa, to raise money for Children of Fire, a charity for child burn victims, and to raise awareness about the dangers of burns throughout the country.

The two young men, accompanied by fellow students Meagan Whitehorn (22) and Lisa Forgan (23) in a support vehicle, be cycling from November 23rd to December 22nd, 2002. They will be visiting hospitals and fire stations anywhere they can on the long road from Vivo on the Botswanan border to Polokwane, Naboomspruiit, Warmbaths, and Pretoria. In late November 2002 they'll be in Johannesburg, possibly to be joined by members of the Isidingo cast for a few kilometres of the route, as well as young adult acid-burn survivor Jerry Pooe and thinners-burns survivor Mfundo Ntamehlo. Metro Police have promised them an escort.

From there it will be on to Vereeniging, Kroonstad, Winberg and Bloemfontein. They will rest for a day before pedalling on again to Smithfield, Aliwal North, Jamestown and Queenstown. For each leg of the route they would like burns survivors to come forward - to talk about safety, to ask for help if they need it, or to increase tolerance of the disfigurement that so often goes with burns.

Around December 9th they'll be in Stutterheim, then East London, Port Alfred, Port Elizabeth and Clarkson. Not stopping to play in Plettenberg Bay, they will be pushing onwards to George, Riversdale, Riversonderend and Betty's Bay. Finally, after a month on the road, they'll go through Somerset West and arrive in Cape Town on December 22nd.

There they will be met by the head of Cape Town Disaster Management Greg Pillay and Sandra Fowkes of Ukuvuka, both of whom see the damage done by fires week in week out in that windy city.

At the beginning of November this year 500 families were left homeless following fires in the massive Joe Slovo squatter camp in Langa and the Wallecedene informal settlement in Kraaifontein.

The team are looking for sponsorship per kilometre to get their wheels rolling; they've got a support kombi from Imperial Car Hire but they still need the petrol and the insurance. They've got accommodation from friends and from Rotary groups that exist in most towns and they've got sunscreen from Levtrade (so they don't go lobster-pink in the sun).

But most of all, they want Southern Africa to wake up to the problem or preventable burns injuries. The media try to highlight the dangers of tapping into illegal electricity or leaving kids alone with a fire or a candle. But somehow it seems that we

aren't shouting loud enough.

Sometimes South Africa maybe gets overwhelmed with the high level of HIV-Aids, of TB, of Malaria, of malnutrition and poverty and unemployment. The problem list seems so long.

But now there is a positive move that we hope you're going to hear on every radio station, on the TV news, in the newspapers and magazines - of young people reaching out to help other young people.

There will be regular website (www.icon.co.za/~firechildren/frontpage.htm) and other media updates as their journey goes on and people will be encouraged to phone or fax 011 482 4258 (or email) if they have a burned child that would like to meet these heroes.

The cycling team will also have two UMashesha volunteers, Thomas Ranamane and Elizabeth Botopela, with them for part of the journey to help with all the languages that are needed to communicate well. Both Thomas and Elizabeth also have St John Ambulance Level 3 First Aid skills.

Your support can make it all worthwhile. Pledge an amount per kilometre by emailing all your details to .

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