

Veterans to cycle through Gettysburg

BY LAURA FAY
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Sixteen injured veterans from the United States, Canada and Denmark will ride through Gettysburg Tuesday as part of a 766-mile journey from Ottawa to Washington, D.C.

The veterans will ride bicycles, hand bicycles and recumbent bicycles as part of the inaugural CanAm Veterans' Challenge, organized by World T.E.A.M. Sports, Soldier On Canada and Wounded Warriors Canada. The riders departed from Canada's capital June 20 and will arrive in America's capital in time for July 4 celebrations, stopping in 14 cities along the way.

The group includes both able-bodied and disabled rid-

ers, who ride between 10 and 90 miles each day.

The journey is about more than miles, though. For many of the veterans, the challenge is a chance to prove both to themselves and to others that they are able to complete the long ride despite injuries and disabilities, said Richard Rhinehart, director of communications at World T.E.A.M. Sports.

"They are proving to themselves that their lives aren't over; they can go out and do remarkable athletic feats that we a lot of us wouldn't try on our own," Rhinehart said.

Rhinehart also noted that the ride allows veterans to show the public that they are not defined by their disabilities. He said a

(See RIDE on Page A2)

Ride

(Continued from Page A1)

veteran once compared his two prosthetic legs to eyeglasses, saying they are not signs of weakness or disability but a tool to improve life and performance.

Rhinehart said events like the CanAm Challenge also allow veterans to create a new support network because they face the trip together. Rhinehart noted that veterans often feel a sense of "emptiness" after leaving the military because they miss the camaraderie they had there, but events like this create opportunities for new friendships.

"Everybody is stronger as a result" of the teamwork at the events sponsored by World T.E.A.M. Sports, he said.

Rhinehart expects riders to arrive in Gettysburg between 3 and 4 p.m. Tuesday because the Gettysburg leg of their trip is longest. They will be riding 85 miles from Reading that day, according to the program itinerary.

The athletes will stay at the Wyndam Gettysburg, 95 Presidential Circle, Tuesday night and depart Wednesday for their next stop, Frederick, Md.

The team's itinerary and a link to live updates are available at canamveterans.org/the-ride/follow-the-riders.