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AIDS/LifeCycle 9

History of AIDS/LifeCycle

AIDS/LifeCycle (ALC) is a seven day, 545-mile bike ride from San Francisco to Los Angeles. The annual event, which began in 2001, raises critical funds for the HIV/AIDS prevention and care services of the L.A. Gay & Lesbian Center and San Francisco AIDS Foundation—the first AIDS service organizations in the nation to produce a multi-day fundraising event of this magnitude.

In May 2002, the first event included 670 courageous riders supported by 250 volunteer “roadies” (support crew). The event raised \$3.2 million. As a first-year event, this was a success on many levels. Notably, the focus of the producers/beneficiaries was not only to raise vital funds for their programs, but to create a highly visible educational event to inform the public that AIDS remains a worldwide crisis. People throughout California were encouraged to talk and learn about HIV, to get tested, and to protect themselves and others from getting infected.

On the heels of this initial success, the staff created a year-round grassroots program to recruit and educate people not only about the event but also about programs and services provided by the center and the foundation. Hundreds of veteran riders and crew members joined staff members throughout the year to participate in dozens of outreach events and speaking engagements. These efforts resulted in ALC 2, held in June of 2003 with 1,011 cyclists and 300 roadies. Collectively, they raised \$4.3 million.

In its third year, encouraged by the wonderful growth of the event, the co-producers created even more opportunities for veterans to get involved. Participants became ambassadors to the public at large and carried the message that this disease remains an urgent cause. Buoyed by a large group of volunteers involved in year-round activities, ALC 3 took place in June 2004 and included 1,200 cyclists and 367 roadies. The event raised more than \$5 million for HIV/AIDS services.

In its fourth year, event participation grew by almost 30 percent. Nearly 1,600 cyclists and more than 400 roadies participated in ALC 4, held in June 2005, raising \$6.8 million.

ALC 5 in June 2006 marked a sobering milestone in the global AIDS pandemic—the 25th anniversary of the first reports of AIDS cases. Re-energized by the fact that the AIDS crisis was now a quarter-century old and still showed no signs of slowing, AIDS/LifeCycle experienced its best year yet, attracting more than 1,800 cyclists and 400 volunteer roadies who raised more than \$8 million.

In 2007 more than 2,300 cyclists and 450 roadies participated in ALC 6, hailing from six countries and 45 states, raising more than \$11 million.

In its seventh year, the event producers/beneficiaries were forced to close registration early to ensure that every rider would have a safe, trouble-free experience. A record-busting 2,500 cyclists and 530 roadies participated in ALC 7 in 2008, raising more than \$12.3 million.

In 2009 the eighth AIDS/LifeCycle was held with nearly 2,200 cyclists and 550 roadies and, in the midst of one of the country’s worst recessions, raised just over \$11 million for the services of the two agencies. This was also the first time the event had to postpone a day of riding due to weather.