

Coast to coast team

continued

prise. The hills, coupled with a strong headwind, made this 25-mile stretch extremely difficult. One student later said that they had to rely on willpower to keep going because it felt as though they would just drop off their bikes before getting to the lunch stop at Green Cove Springs.

After lunch the riders felt rejuvenated. However, the adults were dreading the next hurdle – the Shands Bridge. This bridge is one mile long and has a barrier close to the lane line. The options were to load up the bikes and drive the boys across or “take the road” and have the traffic follow slowly.

They had discussed the options and literally prayed for wisdom, safety, and God’s provision. God answered that prayer in an incredible way. Just as the riders were organizing to cross the bridge, Chris spotted a State Trooper. Chris flagged him down and the officer agreed to escort the bikers across. Not only was the bridge crossing safe, it was fun for the boys.

Once into St. Johns County, they rode north on SR-13, then east on CR-16A, then east on CR-210. They had to take a jog on US-1 to stay on CR-210, which headed them to their objective: the Atlantic Ocean.

By now, other cars joined in the bikers’ chase. Family, friends, the junior high pastor and junior high students from church kept showing up. People cheered the bikers on, then went ahead to wait for the grand arrival at the beach.

Just as it seemed the end was near, one bike had a flat tire which took about 45 minutes to fix. The delay was timely, however, ensuring that the welcoming committee would arrive at the beach before the biking team.

The boys had been dreading the bridge in Palm Valley all day—it looked so intimidating, coming on the final stretch of the ride. All afternoon they talked about how they planned to walk up, thinking it would be just too hard to peddle over. But once on the bridge, no one stopped. One student commented that he was surprised at how easy it was, saying, “After all we had done the last two days, my body was numb to it, and it was not as hard as I had anticipated.”

Around 7:00 p.m., they arrived at Mickler’s Landing beach with huge smiles on their faces and were greeted by more than 40



The team rounds a corner on SR-13.

cheering, banner-holding and photo-taking well-wishers.

The riders went straight to the ocean for another Wheel-dip Photo Shoot to commemorate their team’s having met its huge goal. Standing there, they were filled with joy, accomplishment, relief and even a sense of sadness that it was over.

In two days, five 14-year-olds and three men had ridden for 12 hours and 27 minutes, and covered a total distance of 142.85 miles, at an average speed of 11.5 mph, with a maximum speed of 23.4 mph and most rode mountain or hybrid bicycles.

When asked what impressed them about the trip, the students said, “God provides!” “When I wanted to give up, I didn’t!” “Doing something that big lets me know that I can do other big things!” “When it got hard but I didn’t give up, I found that I really COULD do it!” “I thank God that I was able to do this—and do it without getting hurt.”

As to future riding, several students would like to do a century ride; at least one is dreaming about riding cross-country one day. Many said that they would like to ride across Florida coast to coast again, but are eager to try another route and see new sites. Overall, it was a fantastic experience.

In the future, Gregg suggests that each biker take Traffic Skills 101 as part of the training. His participation in that class was definitely a key ingredient in the success of the ride.