

# Bikers take aim at poverty's cycle

SACRAMENTO, Calif. (CNS) — Sacramento was the first official stop for two dozen bicyclists who are on a cross-country quest this summer to raise awareness about how many people in the United States are living in poverty.

While in Sacramento June 2-3, the riders challenged people to think about poverty, talk about it and take action to eliminate it.

"Every 53 minutes in the United States a child dies from causes related to poverty. We need to do everything in our power to change that," said John Molineaux of St. Ambrose Parish in Cheverly, Md.,

one of the cyclists who spoke to about 100 people gathered at St. Anthony Parish in Sacramento, June 2.

The Catholic Campaign for Human Development, the U.S. bishops' domestic anti-poverty program, is sponsoring the 3,838-mile "Brake the Cycle of Poverty" trip that began in San Francisco June 1 and will end in Washington Aug. 1.

Riders range in age from 19 to 72 and include students, teachers, a seminarian, executives, retirees and two CCHD staff members.

The riders will participate in poverty education programs along their route, such as those at St.



Ken Touchton/CNS

**Bishop William K. Weigand greets cyclists at the first stop of their Brake the Cycle of Poverty cross-country tour June 3 in Sacramento, Calif.**

James Parish in Davis June 1 and at St. Anthony. The riders spent the evening with host families from each parish. One St. Anthony parishioner, Rich Fowler, was riding with the bicyclists as far as Utah.

The local programs, hosted by parishes, schools and dioceses, will be aimed at helping people understand the causes and effects of poverty in the United States and promoting permanent solutions to break the cycle of poverty.

Mary Wright, a CCHD staffer who organized the bike tour and is one of the cyclists, told St. Anthony parishioners that, although the participants are a mix of ages and backgrounds, "we all share one thing in common — our passion for educating people about solutions to poverty and injustice in America."

On the steps of the state Capitol

June 3, Sacramento Bishop William K. Weigand and Stockton Bishop Stephen E. Blaire joined the cyclists for a press conference and then rode with them a short distance as they began their journey east.

Bishop Weigand said the percentage of Californians living in poverty — 13.1 percent — is higher than the national average of 11.7 percent.

Bishop Blaire noted that in San Joaquin County, the largest county in the area covered by the Diocese of Stockton, about 150,000 people, or 25 percent, have no health insurance.

"It's important to speak about the statistics and facts of poverty, or it's possible to lose contact with this reality," he said. "We as a church can do more to assist local communities to address the issue of poverty. I hope this ride will help to stir people's consciences to action."

## New York dioceses plan bike trek

The Diocese of Rochester is supporting the Catholic Campaign for Human Development's cross-country bicycle tour for poverty awareness by participating in a trek with other New York dioceses.

Following the Erie Canal Trail, a series of relay teams from the Diocese of Buffalo will travel from Lockport to Brockport July 27 to deliver a message on local poverty. Cyclists from the Diocese of Rochester will then transport the message to riders in the Diocese of Syracuse, who, in turn, will link up with representatives of the Diocese of Albany.

Also in the Rochester Diocese, a team of riders biking through Monroe, Wayne and Cayuga counties will be joined by bicyclists from Catholic Charities offices and parishes in the Finger Lakes and Southern Tier.

Along the way, riders will stop to highlight local programs to empower people to move beyond poverty.

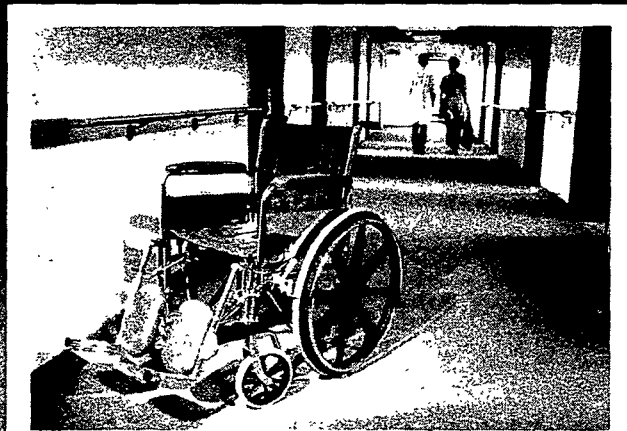
"I see the bike tour as a kickoff of our efforts to increase awareness among Catholics in our diocese of the need for solidarity with the poor," said Ruth Putnam, who coordinates Works of Love for Catholic Charities in the Rochester Diocese and who is overseeing the local bike event.

"I hope the bicycle events start some challenging conversations that continue throughout the coming year," she added.

**EDITOR'S NOTE:** For more information about the Diocese of Rochester tour, contact Ruth Putnam at 585/328-3228, ext. 1366, or e-mail [rputnam@dor.org](mailto:rputnam@dor.org).

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