

## Ride4US: Raising Money for Ultrasounds Is Not Your Typical Walk in the Park

By Holly Smith

TACOMA, WASH.—“Bloom where you’re planted” is sage advice, especially when you are pro-life in hostile territory. Western Washington is one of those parts of the country that is hostile to pro-lifers.

EMILY’s List, the political action committee that raises money for 100% pro-abortion Democratic women, boasts of their success in Washington. It is the only state with both senators and a governor that are all 100% pro-abortion Democratic women. In 2000, voters soundly defeated an initiative to ban partial-birth abortions. And a state that once was seen as a presidential battleground has become increasingly blue.

Yet pro-lifers are resolutely and actively trying to educate their communities on the tragedy of abortion and its life-giving alternatives. There are committed local chapters throughout the state and vigorous Students for Life groups on many of the state’s university campuses. And in the last two years, a new local charity has bloomed in a big way in the Puget Sound area.

According to [www.Ride4US.org](http://www.Ride4US.org), “Ride4US is a charity doing what we can do for mothers and babies through the power of ultrasound. Ride4US raises money to purchase ultrasound machines for clinics offering entirely free services to pregnant women, bringing the joy of motherhood into focus within a loving network of support.”

Ride4US tapped into local enthusiasm for the outdoors by organizing a fundraising bike ride to purchase the ultrasound equipment. Whereas many such events lose money in their first year, the June 2005 ride saw the donation of one ultrasound machine and a \$3,000 cash donation to a crisis pregnancy center (CPC) in Pierce County.

Nine months prior to that, Ride4US’s president and founder, Diego Wendt, conceived of the idea when he and his wife realized that putting their money where their mouth was didn’t amount to enough money for an ultrasound machine, equipment available at only 5% of the nation’s CPCs. Wendt combined his love for cycling with his desire to make ultrasounds available to women considering abortion to create Ride4US, and then recruited key volunteers, including a graphic designer, a web site developer, and a board of directors. Additionally, he incorporated Ride4US as a 501(c)(3) non-profit so that contributions are tax-deductible and began lining up key sponsors to support and promote the event.

Earning \$3,000 for the first event was a little short of Wendt’s expectations and vision for the growth of Ride4US. For instance, there were just over 100 participants, and the goal was 300. The addition of running, walking, and family fun events, as well as pushing the date into September, enabled Ride4US to triple its participation level to over 300 people this year.

Additional participants and sponsors meant additional funds raised. Seven times more in fact, with over \$21,000 raised this year.

With the event held at Pt. Defiance Park, "the crown jewel of Tacoma," Ride4US expanded this year to take greater advantage of the park's wonderful resources and present interested participants with more opportunities for involvement. Billed as "Four Family Friendly Events, One Life-Changing and Life-Giving Day," September 23's Ride4US really did offer something for everyone.

"Our signature event [Biking 4 Babies] offers four fun, challenging, and fully supported routes for riders of all kinds," explained Wendt. There was a leisurely 5-mile ride through Point Defiance Park, a 30-mile scenic tour of Vashon Island, and 62- and 100-mile courses for "Lance Armstrong wannabes."

Beyond the bike rides, individuals and families participated in the 4.5-mile "Dash for Diapers" run through the park, the 5-mile "Trekking for Toddlers" walk in the park, and the Family Fun for US Festival, complete with food, live music, inflatables, and discounted admission to entertainment such as go karts, laser tag, miniature golf, and the zoo, all housed at the park.

In addition to the fun, there is certainly plenty of inspiration to go around. Beyond sharing a fun day with several hundred like-minded people, Wendt describes the highlight as "meeting the top fundraisers and hearing the stories of how impassioned they are about the cause."

The efforts of the small all-volunteer Ride4US staff and the 107 event volunteers were well worth it. Volunteers and participants raised \$21,125 for pregnancy centers in Pierce County. They also grew from 12 sponsors and supporting organizations to 36.

According to Wendt, "We wanted to net \$40,000 to pay for a machine, training, and peripherals. However, we're in negotiations with a premier ultrasound manufacturer to deliver all that for \$21,000."

The nine months it took to plan the first one turned into 17 months to plan the second Ride4US, and the planning for next year's began before this year's even took place. This year's expansion of activities increased turnout, but the Ride4US team is still tinkering with the program to find the perfect balance.

Wendt explained, "We're shortening the event to a half-day event by eliminating the 100-mile ride and trying to get everyone to finish by noon. My prediction: bigger and better—while easier and shorter for event volunteers. Our 2007 goals are \$40,000 net and 500 participants."

How will they do it, considering Ride4US is an all-volunteer organization made up of people with other full-time jobs? Wendt's outlook sums up well why the event has taken off so fast and why it will continue to grow: "God does not call the equipped—He equips the called. ... Pray for strength to do all that you can—and trust that God will do all you cannot."

If you are in the Northwest, mark your calendar for Ride4US Tacoma 2007 on Saturday September 22! More information is available at [www.ride4us.org](http://www.ride4us.org).