

Mountains to the Desert Ride Raises \$46,000

Telluride Watch
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TELLURIDE, Sept. 28, 12:38 p.m. - The Fourth Annual Just for Kids Mountains to the Desert Ride from Telluride to Moab set records Saturday, with an impressive 120 cyclists signed up (one-third of that number coming on board just the day before), 114 of them hitting the road Saturday morning at 7:30 a.m. and 23 of the riders women.

Cyclist Paul Reich wrapped up the 133-mile ride first, in less than six hours. And 51 of the 120 riders raised \$46,000, reports JFK's Erik Fallenius, organizer of the ride, along with his wife, Josephine, across the territory – the San Miguel Watershed – covered by the five-year-old community foundation.

For every \$100 they raise, riders get a raffle ticket, which means that this year, 460 raffle tickets went into the barrel for the grand-prize. The prize, a Moots bike, was won, fittingly, by the rider who overcame the highest odds – James Colt, riding a specially outfitted recumbent bicycle a year after being struck in the head by a 25-pound rock climbing in Ophir's Crack Canyon Oct. 1, 2006, after which it was unclear whether Colt would ever walk, much less cycle, again – to reach the finish line.

Yet less than a year after his brush with paraplegia, Colt credits cycling especially – it has, he says, become the most rewarding aspect of his long-term physical rehabilitation – with his odds-defying recovery. Colt, tragically widowed soon after his horrific accident, decided to work with the kids' organization as his way of giving back to the community that has continually offered its support as he navigates his way to recovery.

Fallenius pronounced himself pleased that JFK, an organization founded in 2000 by the late local entrepreneur and philanthropist Bill Carstens for the benefit of children living in the San Miguel watershed, has sparked such strong local support for the sport of road cycling, with local road-bike gurus on the Paragon Racing Team onboard as well as other high-profile riders. The Carstens Family Foundation matches up to \$50,000 as its donation to Just for Kids, following the ride. The JFK mission statement is this: "Just for Kids will empower the youth of the San Miguel Watershed region and assist the organizations that serve our youth through financial and moral support."

"It's wonderful at the end of the event," says Fallenius, of the post-ride dinner at Eddie McStiff's in Moab, "to be in a room of 150 people who are so involved and so energized by this event – and who have now become so involved in the fundraising."

"We are promoting physical fitness and regional community," he says, of the ride, "and it really is regional community, because the ride covers the same region that Just for Kids programs cover."

Steve Ciecuch won the New Belgium Brewing flat-tire bicycle (and a case of beer) as one of three top fundraisers for the ride.