

# NEWS RELEASE

**Bike Against Hunger cross-country trip shines light on food insecurity in the United States**

*Seattle Rotary member pedaling from Seattle to D.C. to raise awareness*

**EVANSTON, Ill. (June 17, 2014) —** A Seattle area Rotary club member and a companion are cycling from Washington State to Washington, D.C., this summer to raise awareness about hunger in America and – just as important – community-based strategies to address this often overlooked public health issue.

“Many Americans simply don’t realize that food insecurity is not a problem confined to developing countries, but a serious issue facing families in communities coast-to-coast,” says Benjamin Rasmus, program director of [Rotary First Harvest](http://firstharvest.org/), a non-profit volunteer group supported by Seattle area Rotary clubs that works with growers, haulers and local food banks to provide families in need with fresh, unharvested produce that would otherwise go to waste.

“We know that more than 50 million Americans rely on local food banks to feed their families when paychecks are thin or when public food program benefits run out, yet 130 billion pounds of food is wasted in the U.S. each year,” adds Rasmus, who in 2012 cycled 850 miles throughout Washington in the first Bike Against Hunger ride.

For the cross-country trip that began June 18 in Seattle, Rasmus is joined by community activist Heather Hoffman. Their 3,750-mile route, which they hope to complete in 71 days averaging 70-miles per cycling day, includes stops in Portland, Ore., June 21; Boise, Idaho, July 1; Denver, Colo., Denver, July 23-24; Omaha, Neb., July 31; Iowa City, Iowa, Aug. 5; Chicago, Aug. 10-13; Cleveland, Ohio, Aug. 16; and Pittsburgh, Pa., Aug. 19; arriving in Washington Aug. 26 or 27.

Along the way, the team will visit with Rotary clubs, growers, food banks and gleaning projects (in which edible, fresh produce missed during harvest or rejected for aesthetic reasons is salvaged – or “gleaned” -- to feed the hungry).

Since its founding in 1983, Rotary First Harvest has distributed more than 183 million pounds of produce --- much of it gleaned -- that would otherwise have gone to waste, thanks to the work of thousands of volunteers.

Many of Rotary’s 34,000-plus clubs worldwide are active in efforts to alleviate hunger and address the global food shortage. The critical needs met locally by Rotary First Harvest demonstrate that food insecurity affects families in developed countries, as well in the developing world. Internationally, Rotary has a successful partnership with the [**Global FoodBanking Network (GFN)**](http://www.foodbanking.org/site/PageServer?pagename=deploymenthome). In collaboration with GFN, Rotary clubs in 22 countries now work to develop and support food banks benefiting thousands of families.

**About Rotary**

Rotary brings together a global network of volunteer leaders dedicated to tackling the world’s most pressing humanitarian challenges.Rotary connects 1.2 million members of more than 34,000 Rotary clubs in over 200 countries and geographical areas. Their work improves lives at both the local and international levels, from helping families in need in their own communities to working toward a polio-free world. For more information, visit [Rotary.org](http://www.rotary.org). To access broadcast quality video footage and still photos go to: [The Newsmarket](http://www.thenewsmarket.com/rotaryinternational).

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