

Toronto Man cycling across Canada to send Nicaraguan kids to school

By Shelley Cook
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Ilan Levy is cycling across Canada so that he can help send Nicaraguan children to school.

In a phone interview from his hospice room at the University of Regina, the 58-year-old executive coach and avid cyclist said he planned to cycle across Canada for his 60th birthday, but an opportunity to do it on behalf of the Schoolbox Foundation convinced him to start his journey a few years early.

"It started last November," explained Levy, who was invited to a Schoolbox fundraiser in his hometown, Toronto. "I got to meet Tom Affleck, the president of Schoolbox. I'm an avid cyclist and I've been thinking about this cross-Canada-wide for sometime, I was thinking of doing it for my sixtieth birthday, but somehow the two got connected."

Levy and Affleck hammered out the details of the tour in about 10 or 15 minutes that night, and the journey began for Levy on BC's Sunshine Coast on June 7.

When all's said and done, Levy will have travelled just over 8,200 kilometres when he reaches his final destination, Newfoundland, on August 26.

Traveling with seven other cyclists, including a 71-year-old woman from Britain that he met up with in Vancouver, Levy says the journey has been fantastic.

"I can't imagine a better way to see the country," he said.

Aside from the once in a lifetime adventure and raising money and awareness for a cause that he's passionate about, another perk of the tour is the 5,000 to 6,000 calories Levy and his team burns daily by cycling approximately 125 kilometres.

Levy said he felt compelled to raise money for Schoolbox because it's an organization that promotes education, something that he and his wife have benefitted from and are passionate about. He said his goal of raising \$100,000 will help send 20,000 Nicaraguan children to school for an entire year.

"They're so eager to learn and to better themselves," he said, adding that he's been astounded at the outpouring of support from strangers he's met along the way. "I think it's a relatively small thing we can do to help them."

Levy and his crew will have a rest stop in Portage on Saturday, July 9, and then move on to Ontario, where they'll continue their trek.

If you would like to donate to Schoolbox, or keep track of Levy's tour you can log on to www.schoolbox.ca for more information.

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