

# New Jersey cyclists choose Hope for Haiti as beneficiary for 3,000-mile Race Across America

David Ophel and Mats Brodow of Summit, N.J., pedaled across the United States, logging 3,000 miles in eight days, in the hopes of raising \$100,000 for Naples-based Hope for Haiti. The two rode in Race Across America, one of the most respected and longest-running annual endurance events in the world.

Team Summit organizer Craig Flinn and his family have supported Hope for Haiti for many years. He lived on the same New Jersey street where Hope for Haiti Executive Director Elizabeth Davison lived for 35 years, and his parents volunteer at the Hope for Haiti headquarters in Naples during their winters in the area.

“To have this team ride for Hope for Haiti was a remarkable gift,” said Davison. “Craig is a wonderful young man, and our connection with his family made this especially poignant and meaningful for all of us. We watched the race closely.”

“My friends who were riding and everyone in our support crew was extremely excited about raising money for Haiti,” said Flinn. “We hope those who learned about the bike race responded by giving generously.”

Hope for Haiti shared the team’s hopes. For more than two decades, the agency has worked to improve the lives of the poorest of the poor in the Western Hemisphere. Its focus is providing opportunities for children, through education, healthcare and housing, to

better equip them to escape poverty.

First run in 1982, Race Across America is 30 percent longer than the Tour de France, and racers finish in half the time with no rest days. About 75 teams left Oceanside, Calif., June 12, pedaled through 15 states and finished in Annapolis, Md., between June 17 and 20. Mandatory



David Ophel and Mats Brodow

checkpoints in Durango, Colo., and along the Mississippi River must be reached at certain times to continue the race.

Ophel, who is 52 and retired, and Brodow, a 44-year-old stay-at-home dad, continuously alternated biking and resting for three-hour blocks, each covering roughly 50 miles per block, during the entire eight-day period – day and night. As soon as one rider finished his leg, the other rider will cover the next 50 miles.

Eight support-team members kept the riders safe, hydrated, fed and on course. The caravan included two SUVs, an RV, four bikes, extra tubes, tires, chains and cases of water and sports drinks.

Flinn, an EMT, managed the logistics of the ride and the crew, which included a spin instructor and nutrition master, communications professional, trained masseuse and bike mechanic.

During the race, one of the SUVs, carrying a spare bike, food and drinks, extra clothes and headlights for night riding, followed each rider. Each vehicle had a speaker system to allow the driver to communicate with the rider. The RV drove ahead of the SUVs and bikes.

To train for Race Across America, Ophel and Brodow were riding six days and 350 to 500 miles per week. To support Team Summit and their efforts to raise funds for Hope for Haiti, log onto <http://www.firstgiving.com/raamteamsummit>. To see photos of team members and track the team’s progress during the race, visit <http://web.me.com/cflinn/Site/Welcome.html>.

Hope for Haiti is at the forefront of disaster-relief efforts on the ground in Port au Prince and Les Cays, its home base in the south. The agency has distributed more than \$30 million in humanitarian aid to survivors of the January earthquake, while continuing to bring clean water, improved healthcare and better nutrition to more than 500,000 children and adults each year. Hope for Haiti supports 37 schools, 500 teachers and 12,000 students and sponsors special construction projects and other programs throughout the country. To learn more about Hope for Haiti and its work, please call 239.434.7183 or go to [www.hopeforhaiti.com](http://www.hopeforhaiti.com)