

Following are a few sample letters that riders have used to spread the word about their fund raising. Don't plagiarize, but use these as inspiration for a helpful way to solicit funds from your friends and family.

Dear Friends and Family,

As some of you know (not that I ever talk about biking) this summer I am going to ride my trusty bike for 500 miles in one week. I know - you are thinking - "Why in heaven's name would anyone ride 500 miles?" Well, I am doing it to raise money and awareness for affordable housing.

Most of you know about Habitat for Humanity. The goal is to provide safe, affordable, decent housing for as many people as possible. People buy the homes from Habitat after working between 300 - 500 hours of "sweat equity" on their house or other Habitat homes. Having worked in schools where children do poorly because they are continually moving and haven't got a stable, decent home, I feel committed to Habitat's goals and efforts.

So, anyhow, this ride is to raise awareness of, and, you guessed it, funds for Habitat. Last year, Habitat Minnesota was able to keep ride costs below 4%! In other words, \$.96 of every \$1 you donate goes back into construction of these much needed homes. Riders pay their way by paying an entry fee.

If you are at all inclined to sponsor me on this ride, I would be much obliged. I'll do my best to ride well and stay on my bike. I'll bring you plenty of tales from the road. Thanks so much for your help. The ride starts July 15 and ends July 21. Please keep all of us in your thoughts.

Love and thanks,

(sign your name)

P.S. If you want to write a check, it should be made to "Habitat 500" and mailed to me in the enclosed return envelope. Please mail your checks to me by June 30 so that I have plenty of time to turn them in before the ride departs.

Dear Friends and Family,

How, or better yet, why, does one decide to ride the Habitat 500 fundraising bike ride? I think the reasons are as varied as the riders themselves. For me it was a personal challenge; I was told that I would never survive riding that distance. Perhaps there were some grounds for doubting my abilities . . . At that time, the farthest I had ever ridden in my 40 years was eight miles and, to top it off, I didn't even own a bike! Suffering some temporary loss of sanity, I registered for the ride anyway.

After receiving the Habitat 500 info and reading through it, reality and a bit of panic set in... how would I be able to raise the pledges I needed? I had no idea how people would respond to my asking them to support an organization I knew nothing about. My anxiety proved unnecessary. The first few people I asked were very familiar with the Habitat for Humanity organization and were more than happy to sponsor me. The more people I talked to about the ride and Habitat in general, the more I learned and the more I raised!

Raising pledge money was easier than finding a bike to ride and time to ride it! But where there's a will, there's a way, and following the training tips offered in the ride information, I was ready (or so I thought) to ride in the first Habitat 500. From a first-time rider's point of view, I found the ride well organized and the support staff extremely helpful. I also found a lot of interest and support from the towns we pedaled through and from people along the route - not only for the cyclists but also for the whole Habitat organization. I was duly impressed with the extent of services Habitat for Humanity provides.

This year will be my fifth year riding the Habitat 500. Experience in riding has taught me a few successful ways to alleviate some of the physical discomfort associated with the sport, but the real success of any ride lies in the people who put countless volunteer hours into organizing and attending to every last detail. They are the real heroes! My hat goes off to them for making each ride unique, fun and safe.

Habitat 500 Cyclist

500 Miles on a Bicycle! Why?

Speaking for Habitat for Humanity, I invite you to join me in making quality, affordable home ownership possible for low-income families in our local communities.

To help build these homes I'm going on a 500-mile fund raising bicycle ride this July called the HABITAT 500. You can help in this effort. I'll even give you a choice; either come along on the ride or pledge your support for our efforts. If you are available and would like to go on the ride, please call me and I'll help you get started.

I do understand it's a busy time of the year so you may choose to offer a pledge. How do you do that? You can pledge for each individual mile. Perhaps you would pledge for one particular day of my pain. You can always pledge for the entire excruciating, agonizing, tormenting, unbearable, joyful ride.

How much? This is up to you! All contributions are tax deductible. The average pledge is \$60. For each individual contributing \$_____ or more, I will bring back a nice souvenir and take them out to lunch.

Please sign the pledge sheet today so you don't forget. I will be taking the cash, checks, and money orders from now until the start of the ride on July 15, 2006.

Habitat for Humanity has already built more than 100,000 homes around the world. These homes are then sold to qualified low-income families with no-interest loans. I feel strongly about this non-profit organization and ask that you pledge what you can. Please make your checks payable to HABITAT 500.

I thank you for your participation in this great event.

This is what worked for me when it came to ask for money from my fellow workers. I started with a simple little poster in the lunchroom to get everybody's attention. A few days later I posted a copy of the pledge sheet next to the poster. It was kind of fun to see the competition of certain individuals out bid each other.

The company that I work for will match donations to charities dollar for dollar. After I got the list of people who were going to donate, I sent out a notification of what they owed. I included the form needed for the matching dollars. The form was completed for each donation so that all they had to do was sign and send the check. Several people said they had forgotten that the company would match donations. This worked very nicely.

After the ride, I followed up with a Thank You card to all who donated and reminded them that their gift was tax deductible. Again, I got a few nods of appreciation.

Don't Forget to Write “Thank You” Cards!

- Write postcards from the road.
- Tell about the towns you visit.
- Send note cards when you get back and tell about highlights and challenges of the ride.
- Send letters around tax season so that your donors know their gift is tax deductible.
- Be creative and make it fun for both you and your donors

Sample Thank You Card

Thank you so much for your support for my Habitat 500 bike ride. It was quite an adventure and truly a challenge riding 500 miles in one week.

I met some great people from all over the country who enjoy biking and have a strong passion for affordable housing for all people.

Although you were not physically with me, I could feel your support as I pedaled up those hills and on the long days when I wasn't sure my legs could pedal any more.

Thanks again for your pledge. Together we have helped build affordable homes for moms, dads, and children in need of a decent place to live.

(signature)

Donations to the Habitat 500 are tax deductible. Habitat for Humanity MN remains exempt under 501(c)(3) of the IRS Code.

If you do have a fundraiser whereby your donors received some good or service for their donation, please use the following tax receipt statement:

Donations to the Habitat 500 are tax deductible. In compliance with the IRS regulations, contributions are only tax deductible beyond the fair market value of the goods or services provided or purchased. Habitat for Humanity Minnesota remains exempt under 501(c)(3) of the IRS Code.