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David Ophel (left) and Mats Brodow will cycle in the Race Across America to raise funds to support Naples-based Hope for Haiti.

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

NAPLES, Fla. (May 28, 2010) – David Ophel and Mats Brodow of Summit, N.J., will pedal 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 will ride 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 is a remarkable gift,” said Davison. “Craig is a wonderful young man, and our connection with his family makes this especially poignant and meaningful for all of us. We will be watching the race closely.”

“My friends who are riding and everyone in our support crew is extremely excited about raising money for Haiti,” said Flinn. “We hope those who learn about the bike race will respond by giving generously.”

Hope for Haiti shares 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 will leave Oceanside, Calif., June 12, pedal through 15 states and finish in Annapolis, Md., between June 17 and 20. Mandatory 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, will continuously alternate 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 finishes his leg, the other rider will cover the next 50 miles.

Eight support-team members will keep the riders safe, hydrated, fed and on course. The caravan will include two SUVs, an RV, four bikes, extra tubes, tires, chains and cases of water and sports drinks. Flinn, an EMT, will manage the logistics of the ride and the crew, which includes 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, will follow each rider. Each vehicle will have a speaker system to allow the driver to communicate with the rider. The RV will drive ahead of the SUVs and bikes.

To train for Race Across America, Ophel and Brodow are 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/raamteamsupport>. 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