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Bradley Geerlinks (left) and Brian Flikkema, both of Georgetown, will travel to Seattle this Saturday to begin a two-month-long cross-country anti-poverty charity ride. The Christian Reformed Church members will end their 6,246-km trek August 30 in Jersey City, New Jersey.

Photo by Eamonn Maher



## Georgetown men eager to start coast-to-coast U.S. charity ride

EAMONN MAHER  
Staff Writer

Cycling across North America is a daunting physical challenge on its own, but a couple of Georgetown residents have even bigger goals in mind as they prepare to depart on the Sea to Sea Bike Tour this weekend.

Eighteen-year-old Bradley Geerlinks and Brian Flikkema, 31, didn't know each other until learning through their affiliation with the Christian Reformed Church that they're among about 127 riders who will attempt to complete the 6,246-km trek from Seattle, Wash. to Jersey City, N.J., June 30 to Aug. 30.

Their motivation for this bike trek across the continent comes from the same place—having heard about a similar successful trip in 2005. Flikkema heard about the idea a couple of years ago through a friend and was so inspired that he recently quit his job to take up the challenge.

"It's an adventure, but we can also do something good for society instead of just sitting back and donating a couple of bucks," said Flikkema. "There's an awareness factor involved and we're actually going out there to do something that people can see. That's my main drive for this."

Geerlinks spent time on missions to the Philippines and Nicaragua, where he saw firsthand the despair of those unable to help themselves.

"Just seeing some of the poor people in those countries... We have so much here and they don't have anything," said Geerlinks, a student at Redeemer University in Ancaster.

"So the opportunity to bike across the country— which is going to be an awesome experience— while we're also advocating support and raising money for the poor at the same time is going to be amazing."

Approximately 220 people, ranging in age

from 18 to 80, from as far away as Haiti, have registered for the tour, although some aren't riding from start to finish.

Those going the full distance had a fundraising target \$10,000 and both local men have reached that total, receiving donations from family, friends and the general public. Proceeds from the tour will support new and ongoing programs by the Christian Reformed Church to "break the cycle of poverty around the world."

As if the physical toll of the tour isn't enough— with an average of 116 kms covered each day— the cyclists will also perform relief work on their eight "off" days during the 62-day tour, including a stop in Iowa to help with recent flooding cleanup efforts. Riders won't have to carry their own camping gear as a truck will accompany them and they'll be sleeping in schools, churches and on soccer fields along the way.

Geerlinks and Flikkema have been training for the ride and purchased elite-level racing bikes but admit the length of the tour, which will wind through southern Ontario, is difficult to fathom.

"It's kind of a W-shaped route," added Flikkema. "We do have to go through some mountains down through Colorado, but people who have done it before say that the Prairies are the toughest part, when you're riding into 60-kilometre winds, it feels like it takes forever just to make it through one kilometre."

Geerlinks received a scare recently when he injured his back while at work in his landscaping job but says he's fine now and keen to fly to Seattle this Saturday to get the tour started.

"I haven't been training enough but I play hockey three times a week so I'm in good shape," he said. "I think the first week will hurt a lot, but once we get going we should be okay."

For more information, visit the website [www.seatosea.org](http://www.seatosea.org).



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