

# Spokespeople



## **Couple completes Bike MS rides in all 50 states**

by Shara Rutberg



**David Fox and Koreen Burrow have**

**completed Bike MS rides in all 50 states. And they've raised \$175,000 as they've pedaled**

**across the country.** Photo courtesy of David Fox and Koreen Burrows

David Fox watched his wife, Koreen Burrow, pedal through freezing Alaskan rain that blew sideways during her first Bike MS ride in 2007. He recalls thinking at the time, “Well, this will be the last time she ever does this.”

He couldn’t have been more wrong. Burrow, 53, who was diagnosed with multiple sclerosis in 1991, has completed 67 Bike MS rides. And although Fox, 55, who, when presented with a road bike couldn’t believe he could fit his rear end on a seat so tiny and often mentions his preference for the couch, has pedaled with her on every ride since that first one.

With more than 80 events across the country, Bike MS is the largest fundraising bike series in the world. In October 2017, the couple completed their goal of riding in Bike MS events in all 50 states when they pedaled across the finish line at Bike MS: Breakaway to the Beach in North Carolina. The accomplishment is even more impressive when you learn that in spring 2017, Burrow was diagnosed with breast cancer, underwent surgery and radiation, and was back on her bike with Fox by her side within weeks. So far, she’s cancer-free. “It will take more than MS and cancer to turn that smile upside down,” says Fox of his wife’s infectious grin. “Burrow is the toughest person I know.”

Every year, more than 80,000 participants and 7,000 teams take part, according to Stacy Mulder, vice president of Bike MS at the National Multiple Sclerosis Society.

Shortly after Fox proposed to Burrow, she received her MS diagnosis. Burrow says she “gave him an out” before the wedding but “he insisted on going through with it, and we’ve never looked back.”

### **Upping their gam**

Before that first Alaska ride, Burrow hadn’t even owned a bicycle until college. But a friend loaned her a bike and helped her train. Fox drove behind the whole way in case she needed help. After that, the couple was hooked. They did a few rides out of state through the national Bike MS Passport program, which allows cyclists who have raised at least \$5,000 through Bike MS to ride in any other Bike MS event within the year without additional fundraising. “When my disease flared up, it became clear that we needed to up our game to raise awareness for a cure,” Burrow says. “That’s when we decided to commit to a Bike MS ride in every state.”



**David Fox has a tattoo for each state in which he's completed a Bike MS event.** Photo courtesy of David Fox

Fox pledged that commitment in ink: For each state they've ridden, he's added a tattoo to his leg with a symbol for that state. The Alaska ride got a mosquito, the state's unofficial mascot. New York got Lady Liberty, Nevada a pair of dice. "That way, we know which ones we've done, and she can't make me repeat any," Fox jokes.

The biggest challenge has been the logistics, the couple says. Many rides occur on the same weekend and traveling across the country with bikes in tow can be difficult. At first the retired couple tried flying to events and renting bikes, but that was a hassle. So they bought a 20-foot-long travel trailer, which they live in for five to six months each year, traveling throughout the country with their rescue cat, Francis. When they're not on the road, they live in Las Vegas.

The couple has raised more than \$175,000 for the Society. However, their nomadic lifestyle makes fundraising challenging, they say. For example, they're not in one place long enough to plan fundraising events they can promote for very long. They believe their bigger impact has been attracting new riders to the cause. "It's so critical that rides include new riders every year for the sustainability of the program," Burrow says.

Mulder says their efforts have "created incredible awareness about the Bike MS series as a whole. They are also developing great relationships in [areas] where they participate and serving as an inspiration for many."

## **Favorite experiences**

Of all the miles they've pedaled, what were their favorite rides? "It's pretty hard to beat Hawaii," Burrow says. "It's just beautiful. And the Alaska ride is gorgeous and will always have a special place in our hearts because it was our first."

Burrow's favorites are based on the level of challenge and the scenery. Fox's are based on food. "Maine has a lobster dinner at the end," he says. "And Alabama's got a big seafood buffet."

Different rides have also offered unique, incredible experiences. In Las Vegas, the couple got to ride their bikes around the Las Vegas Speedway. In California, they pedaled across the Golden Gate Bridge. "Every state has something special," Burrow says.

The best part, they agree, has been the people they meet along the way. They've even repeated rides in some states they already completed just to ride with friends—and no, Fox says, laughing, he didn't add additional tattoos. He's running out of leg.

**Shara Rutberg is a freelance writer in Evergreen, Colorado.**

Learn more about [Bike MS](#).

See the couple's Facebook page, [David & Koreen Bike the US 4 MS](#).