

Bike 4 CHF Coverage in Victorville Daily Press



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A FAN: Nels Matson greets 4-year-old Kennedy Speitel on Wednesday morning. Both Matson and Speitel have had open heart surgery, and Matson is beginning a cross-country bike ride for the Children's Heart Foundation.

Biking for a cure

BY PAIGE RYAN
SPECIAL TO THE DAILY PRESS

VICTORVILLE • Twenty-five years after he underwent open heart surgery to repair a congenital heart defect, Nels Matson is biking across the country to raise money for children with the same condition.

"I want to use my health to raise money for research so others with congenital heart defects can live healthy lives," Matson said.

At age 3, the native of Bradenton, Fla., received open heart surgery, which left him with a 6-inch scar on his chest. However, unlike many children

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with CHD he survived, and by age 5 he was given a clean bill of health by doctors.

Able to carry on a healthy life, Matson went to wrestle for Iowa State University and began competing in marathons and triathlons.

Now Matson is trying to raise \$100,000 for research and awareness for children with similar conditions by biking from Santa Monica to New York City.

Matson left Tuesday and headed to his first stop — Victorville. He will continue riding until July 20, when he is scheduled to arrive in



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RIDING FOR A CURE: Nels Matson rides along Hesperia Road en route to Baker. Wednesday was the second day of his bike ride to New York City to raise awareness and funds for the Children's Heart Foundation.

New York City. Matson will complete more than 3,700 miles as he travels an average of 100 miles a day.

According to the Children's Heart Foundation, one in 100 children are born with a CHD. Of these children, 10 percent don't reach

their first birthday. But with the help of individuals such as Matson, funding for research of CHD has helped decrease the death rate by 30 percent in the past decade.

Matson hopes to arrive in Las Vegas on Friday, where he will meet with

several CHD survivors such as himself on his way to New York.