

**BRAKING THE CYCLE**

# Resident to support charity with 275-mile bicycle ride

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Staff Writer

**FAIR LAWN** – For the fourth time borough resident Mary Nix will be riding 275 miles on her bicycle to support HIV/AIDS charities.

"My goal is to get people to realize it is not a gay disease," said Nix, 54. "It is about all walks of life."

The Braking the Cycle ride will benefit the HIV/AIDS services of the Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual & Transgender Community Center. This year's three-day ride will begin Sept. 15 in Gettysburg, Pa., before finishing at the center in New York City on Sept. 17.

"It is a wonderful, rewarding experience," said Nix, who lived in the borough for three years in the 1950s before returning in 1973 to live in the house her grandfather built.

After a close friend died from AIDS, Nix heard an advertisement on the radio announcing the ride for HIV/AIDS charities.

"It just sounded like fun," she said.

While she admits she was intimidated the first time she participated in the event, it did not stop Nix from signing up to take part each year since.

"It is very rewarding and emotionally fulfilling," she said.

For that first event, she got back on a bike for the first time in 20 years in April to prepare for the ride, which was then held in July. Nix used a borrowed bicycle and did not know anybody else riding.

Equipped with a new bicycle for the next race, Nix has participated in the rides from Maryland to New York City and when it was held from Bear Mountain to Boston.

Nix said when she finds herself asking why she is taking part in the ride, she looks over and sees someone with HIV riding, which answers her question.

In addition to riding in honor of her friend, Nix also participates for others who may not be able to do it themselves. Attached to her shirt or her bike are laminated photographs of the people she is riding for each year.

"I will gladly do it for anybody," Nix said.

She said people from all walks of life who have been touched by

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## Mary Nix

HIV or AIDS ride or cheer the cyclists on along the route.

Nix said part of what makes the ride so special is the stories shared about friends and loved ones impacted by the disease.

"The stories you hear along the way are incredible," she said.

The support from those cheering for the riders helps motivate Nix. In past rides, she said an elderly couple has provided water and cookies for cyclists. Another year, children from a nursery school held up signs rooting them on. Many residents along the route place their sprinklers facing the streets so riders can cool off.

Nix's children, Jennifer and Jason, are among the supporters cheering her on at the finish line.

"I think they are pretty amazed by it," said Nix about the reaction of her family. "They are very proud."

To prepare for the event, Nix has already been doing 15- to 16-mile rides, "preferably with hills." As it gets closer to the start date she will do two, 80-mile rides the weekend before. She also does push-ups and sit-ups to prepare and strengthen her upper body.

After the event, Nix said she will continue riding through the fall.

"I will keep riding until it is too cold," she said.

While Nix said, "Every little bit helps," when it comes to raising funds for the charities, she said it is really about showing the disease impacts people from all walks of life.

*Flat donations or donations per mile can be made to support Nix by logging on to [www.brakingthecycle.org](http://www.brakingthecycle.org). Under donate now, residents can find Nix's name as biker No. 108.*

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