



The Children's Heart Foundation™

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**Man Rides Bike Across America for The Children's Heart Foundation**  
***"BIKE 4 CHF" Aims to Raise \$100,000 for Congenital Heart Defect Research***

**LINCOLNSHIRE, Ill.** – A congenital heart defect survivor will ride his bike, and repaired heart, across America, beginning June 8, 2010, to raise awareness and \$100,000 in research dollars for the Children's Heart Foundation (CHF).

"BIKE 4 CHF"—the journey of Nels Matson, 27, of Bradenton, Fla.—is the first fundraiser of its kind for the Children's Heart Foundation, a national non-profit that funds the most promising research to learn more about congenital heart defects (CHDs), the number-one birth defect in America, which affects 40,000 babies every year and one in every 100 newborns.

Matson will ride his road bike 3,709 miles, from Santa Monica, Calif., to New York, N.Y., from June 8 to July 20, 2010, averaging 100 miles per day. Along his route, Matson will meet up with and ride alongside Children's Heart Foundation supporters of all ages in 15 states and encourage them to donate to CHF through his Web site, [www.athletes4heart.com](http://www.athletes4heart.com).

The Children's Heart Foundation has named Matson its first ever "Kid with Heart," in honor of Matson's service to congenital heart defect awareness and fundraising in his BIKE 4 CHF ride.

"Nels Matson's story resonates with people across the country—particularly with children and families who have lived, or are living, with CHDs," said Megan Van Pelt, president of the Children's Heart Foundation. "He's a walking, running and biking example of perseverance and proof that nothing is impossible."

Matson was born a healthy baby in 1982, and though his doctor heard a heart murmur early on, the physician thought Matson, like most kids, would outgrow it. However, when the doctor listened to Matson's heart again at age three, he was concerned. A series of tests were conducted, and during surgery, Matson was officially diagnosed with the congenital heart defect (Partial Anomalous Pulmonary Venous Return with an Atrial Septal Defect).

Matson underwent surgery at Children's Memorial Hospital in Chicago, Ill., and received a clean bill of health at age five. He still has the heart he was born with and today is remarkably active. Matson wrestled for Iowa State University in college, and in 2009, he raised funds for the Children's Heart Foundation—completing a 70.3 Ironman and his very first marathon.

“Whenever I tell people my story, and about how common congenital heart defects are, they are shocked,” said Matson. “The goal of BIKE 4 CHF is to turn that surprise into action. By supporting the Children's Heart Foundation, donors are investing in research that will save little lives.”

There are 35 different types of CHDs, but little is known about the cause of them and there is not yet a cure for any of them. The Children's Heart Foundation has funded 37 research projects and funded \$3.6 million for research.

“We're learning more about CHDs all the time,” said William Foley, executive director of the Children's Heart Foundation. “But until children are no longer lost to congenital heart disease, the Children's Heart Foundation will not rest. Nels Matson shares our passion, and we are so thrilled that he will be spreading this message on the road this summer.”

Matson will begin his ride in Santa Monica, Calif., on June 8, and end in New York, N.Y., on July 20, stopping in bike shops across the country for early morning meet ups and quarter-mile ride-a-longs with Children's Heart Foundation supporters. Along his eastward journey, he'll pass through a host of small cities, as well as the following metropolitan areas:

- Las Vegas, Nev.: June 11
- Denver, Colo.: June 22
- Omaha, Neb.: June 30
- Des Moines, Iowa: July 2
- Chicago, Ill.: July 7
- Indianapolis, Ind.: July 10
- Columbus, Ohio: July 13
- Pittsburgh, Pa.: July 15
- Philadelphia, Pa.: July 19

At his 7 a.m. departure from each city, Matson will dedicate segments of his journey to children with congenital heart defects.

Sponsors for BIKE 4 CHF include Build-A-Bear Workshop, Hilton Hotels, mix1 Protein Antioxidant Sports Drink, Myakka Technologies, Inc., and WSLR 96.5 LPFM Sarasota Community Radio 'Local Matters', and families, including Michael and Ellen Weiss.

To make a journey to the Children's Heart Foundation, through BIKE 4 CHF, and to learn more about the ride, visit <http://athletes4heart.blogspot.com>. You also can find Matson and his journey on on Facebook (“Athletes4Heart”) and on Twitter at <http://twitter.com/athletes4heart>.

## **The Children's Heart Foundation**

Motivated by the needs of children, the goal of the Children's Heart Foundation is to bring health, hope and happiness to children impacted by congenital heart defects, the number-one birth defect in the U.S. The CHF accomplishes this goal by funding the most promising research to advance the diagnosis, treatment and prevention of congenital heart defects. For information on the CHF, visit [www.childrensheartfoundation.org](http://www.childrensheartfoundation.org).

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