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## Cyclists take off in AIDS fund-raiser 700 riders leave at sunrise in first S.F.-L.A. LifeCycle ride

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Tuesday, May 13, 2002

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URL: <http://www.sfgate.com/cgi-bin/article.cgi?file=/chronicle/archive/2002/05/13/BA133796.DTL>

Some did it to support someone they know with HIV, or because funding for AIDS treatment and prevention is not keeping pace with the rate of new infections. A few just wanted to test their own physical stamina.

Whatever their reason, 700 riders took off at sunrise today for the inaugural AIDS LifeCycle, a 600-mile journey from San Francisco to Los Angeles to raise money for AIDS prevention and treatment.

"I lost too many friends to AIDS," said Peter Baty, a 34-year-old interior designer from Palo Alto, who gathered at the University of San Francisco for today's ride kickoff. "I can't not do it."

The new ride was created out of a dispute over money between the organizer of the 8-year-old California AIDS Ride and the two AIDS charities it benefited:

the San Francisco AIDS Foundation and the Los Angeles Gay and Lesbian Center.

The charities claimed ride organizer Pallotta TeamWorks didn't return enough money to the charity causes it was intended to benefit. As a result, the San Francisco AIDS Foundation and Los Angeles Gay and Lesbian Center started their own ride, which began shortly after 6 this morning.

As a result of the rift, Pallotta, a Los Angeles commercial fund-raiser, which started the AIDS Ride in 1994 and has contributed \$40 million to the two groups, countered with a lawsuit, claiming breach of contract. A Los Angeles judge dismissed the case.

But the legal wrangling left some past riders angered, and many have decided to skip both events.

Baty, who has participated in the California AIDS Ride for the past five years, considered taking a break this year. He heard about the dispute and decided to throw his support behind the new ride.

"I'm really excited to be part of a new beginning," he said.

He was joined by veteran AIDS ride cyclists and first timers, HIV-positive and HIV-negative riders, parents, couples and singles. Each had to raise a minimum of \$2,500 and train for several months leading up to the ride.

Despite the dispute, Pallotta's California AIDS Ride-9, from San Francisco to Los Angeles, is set for June 2 through June 8. Company officials say more than 1,000 riders have registered.

Even with the \$4.4 million raised for LifeCycle as of today, with more to come before mid-June, AIDS Foundation executive director Pat Christen said it is going to be a "belt-tightening" year for the 20-year-old organization.

"But I'm thrilled with the outcome," she said. "It was an ethical decision and the right decision for the long term. I'm proud about the people who have stepped up, the larger community. I promise we're going to do right by the people we serve."

The ride will conclude Sunday in Los Angeles.

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