



**Health Collaborative**

Bexar County's *Community* Health Leadership



## A Question and Answer Session with Teddy Herrera

Teddy Herrera grew up in Elk Grove, CA. He's lived an active life since he was 5 years old. He played baseball, football, basketball and practiced martial arts. While attending Laguna Creek High School he became an accomplished football and baseball player. He later attended the University of Arizona where he continued his baseball career for two years. After his father passed away from a cardiac arrest in 2007, he relocated to his hometown of Elk Grove to run his father's business of organizing and operating youth baseball tournaments throughout Northern California. After a year, Teddy and his Mother decided to let the business go. The day after deciding to let the business go, Teddy purchased a ticket to South America where he backpacked for about a year. Two months after his return from South America, he departed on his current 11,000 mile book and motivational speaking bicycle tour. Teddy is the founder of Across America for Childhood Obesity, a non-profit organization that aims to end childhood obesity.

What got you started on your passion against childhood obesity?

T: I first became conscious of overall health when my father passed away in 2007. He suffered a heart attack at the age of 47, but was below the average weight for his age and height. However, he had a poor diet and did not exercise regularly. That event redefined the term obesity for me. Our culture defines obesity as an unhealthy size, when in fact, obesity is an unhealthy lifestyle, and the choices we make within. From that moment, I have made the necessary choices throughout my day, to ensure my future health and wellness.

It wasn't until March of 2010, when I notice the epidemic of childhood obesity. What began as a normal visit to my grandmother's home changed my life forever. I asked my 12 year old cousins to play baseball outside on a beautiful California spring day. They looked at me with a blank stare that came from watching hours of television and dismissed the idea with a quick shake of the head. At that moment, I realized the negative role technology was playing in the lives of not only my cousins, but in the lives of millions of children across America.

The next day I founded my organization Across America for Childhood Obesity and began coordinating a 11,000-mile bike ride across the nation to raise awareness on this pressing issue. I am also changing the way our country views childhood obesity. Childhood obesity is not an unhealthy size, but unhealthy lifestyles, in which, technology isolates our youth, hindering them in the pursuit of their dreams. On this journey I will have traveled to 21 major cities inspiring children of all sizes to get up, get out and actively chase their dreams!

What would you like to see changed in the younger generation?

T: I would like to see our younger generation be a part of, and play an active role within, their community. Simply put, I want to see kids playing outside. I ride 100 miles a day through the neighborhoods of our country, and rarely see a pickup game consisting of the kids of the communities. My 12 year old cousins don't know half of the kids in the neighborhood and it has been technology isolating them within their households. This isolation is diminishing our youth's imagination and ambition to dream. By sharing my story, I hope kids change their perspective of possibilities and understand that ANYTHING is possible, when you make the decision to accomplish it and take that first step outside their front doors.

Do you train your body for the physical toll of bicycling across America?

T: I did not have any cycling experience prior the departure of my 11,000-mile childhood obesity awareness ride. I was not able to obtain any sponsorship due to my inexperience and physical experience. Nobody believed in me. Actually, there was one person that did believe in me. Fortunate for me, it was the only person that matters, and the only person that needs to believe in you for you to accomplish your goal. And that one person is you. I believed in myself, and knew that my opinion was the only one that mattered.

Understanding I was on my own, I emptied my savings account to purchase all material and gear necessary to accomplish my goal of changing the way our youth lead their lives. I purchased my bicycle 6 days before I departed Sacramento, CA June 5, 2010, leaving me with 36 dollars in my pocket. Therefore I did not have much time to train my body nor mind. But I understood that once I made the DECISION to accomplish my dream, NOTHING would stand in my way; not money, inexperience, nothing.

What sort of food do you consume to help you sustain your energy?

T: When I first started my journey, I was eating anything I could because I was limited by resources and money. I quickly discovered that what I ate determined how my body performed throughout my 100-mile days. Eating fast food and package food, my body would feel sluggish and not perform at its best. You are what you eat and the food you put into your body will directly and immediately affect the way you feel and perform. After understanding this, I ate whole grains, lean protein, fruits and vegetables and the results were undeniable. With a well-balanced diet and hydration, I was riding 100-miles + with energy to spare. And at the end of my rides with that spare energy, I like to get in a quick workout to keep a well-balanced fitness regimen.

How can people stay connected to you while you are on your journey?

T: People can connect and follow me on Facebook (Teddy Herrera and Across America for Childhood Obesity) and Twitter (@onepedalatatime). They may also find more background information about me and my inspiration at [www.acrossamericaforchildhoodobesity.wordpress.com](http://www.acrossamericaforchildhoodobesity.wordpress.com)

As you ride your bike through rural areas, between cities what goes through your mind?

T: I do not think much during my 8 hour days of riding. I am sure you have heard of the expression 'In the zone'. Well, I am 'In the zone' every minute of my ride. Which means that I am fully concentrated all of my focus and energy on a single moment in time; the only one that matters- The present. For me, everyday, that single moment in time is the next pedal stroke of my bicycle. Outside of that single moment in time, nothing else matters, because if you do not accomplish it, you will not reach any other moments in time of your goal. If I do not accomplish that next pedal stroke, I will not reach the next community, the next opportunity to share my story with a kid and, certainly, will not complete 11,000-miles.

How does it feel to be an inspiration to people all over America?

T: It is very difficult to feel like an inspiration, when I am inspired by people I encounter every day. It does feel incredible to share my story, demonstrating to youth that you need nothing else but the DECISION to accomplish a dream and the belief in yourself, to make your dream reality.