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Blind cross?country cyclist to visit Ontario

On Sunday, Aug. 4, blind cyclist Craig Aucoin began the ride of a lifetime. Departing St. John's, N.L., Aucoin and his good friend and cycling partner, Lloyd McLean, began their 85-day, 8,260 km bicycle tour across the country. McLean will travel through Ontario from Friday, Aug. 30 until Sunday, Sept. 22.

Their national ride is raising awareness for three major Canadian charities that Aucoin credits for changing his life: CNIB, Canadian Guide Dogs for the Blind and YMCAs in Canada.

?Craig's story embodies what we do at CNIB. Through our personalized support services, we work with people who are blind or partially sighted, empowering them to overcome the challenges of vision loss, build new skills and lead more confident, independent lives,? said Shari Lovelock, Director of Development, CNIB - Ontario. ?We wish Craig and Lloyd all the best with their monumental journey ahead.?

Aucoin is the first blind Canadian to cycle across the country on a two-wheeled bicycle, but the journey to get here hasn't always been easy.

Born with the incurable eye condition, retinitis pigmentosa, Aucoin was able to live a normal, active childhood until age 15 when his condition worsened leaving him completely blind. This affected Aucoin both physically and emotionally.

?In the past 10 years, Craig has completely turned his life around for the better. He has lost 80 pounds, completed several running events and triathlons and continues to exercise and eat properly. Craig's dream was to be fit and strong, so you could say he is now living his dream and inspiring thousands of people along the way,? said McLean.

Aucoin and McLean are travelling over 8,260 km cross-country on the Altena Janus, a back-to-back recumbent tandem bicycle - the only one of its kind in Canada. The pair will arrive in Victoria, B.C. on Oct. 27, 2013. Canadians will have the opportunity to meet Aucoin and McLean along the way at Craig Gives Back community receptions.

For more information on the Craig Gives Back-to-Back Cross Canada Bicycle Tour or to donate, please visit craiggivesback.ca and ?like' Craig Gives Back on Facebook at facebook.com/craiggivesback.

To donate $5 on your mobile phone, text 45678 with keyword CRAIG.