

Texas 4000: Students Bike Cross-Country for a Cause

BY POOJA SALHOTRA, STAFF WRITER | JUNE 21, 2019



Tonya Chen and Caroline Bik are en route to Anchorage, Alaska with Texas 4000, the longest charity bike ride in the world.

The last time **Tonya Chen** owned a bike was when she was in elementary school. Now, the recent University of Texas graduate is biking from Austin, TX to Anchorage, AK as part of **Texas 4000 for Cancer**, the longest annual charity bike race in the world.

“At first it was a little hard,” Tonya said during her rest day in New Orleans, Day 10 of the 70-day journey. “I’d always forget to clip out, and I’d fall on my side, but it was quick to learn how to balance. After those few initial falls, I got the hang of it.”

Tonya, who graduated from Bellaire High School in 2015, is one of 83 UT at Austin student cyclists participating in this year’s ride, which kicked off on May 31 and ends on Aug. 9. But Texas 4000 is more than a bike ride. The UT program runs for 18 months and involves a competitive application process with essays and interviews. If selected, students must commit to three semesters of a program that includes volunteering more than 50 hours in their community, completing 2,000 training miles and planning all aspects of the summer ride – from finding hosts to stay with, to fundraising a minimum of \$4500 per person, to seeking sponsors. Remarkably, cycling experience is not a requirement for participation – in fact, some of this year’s riders had never been on a bike before.