

# **Student bikes to Alaska and back**

(Dec. 10, 2009)

Incoming Seminole State College freshman Steven Perezluha accomplished a feat most people can only dream of: He rode his bike all the way to Alaska and back.

Perezluha, the son of Seminole State math Professor Carol Perezluha, set off from his home in Longwood on June 8, just three days after graduating from Lake Mary High School. He rode 1,259 miles to Pittsburgh, where he met up with his uncle, Danny Chew, also an avid cyclist. From there, the pair traveled more than 5,000

miles through Buffalo and Canada, hauling nearly 100 pounds of supplies as they battled cold temperatures, wind and rain.

"Dealing with the cold weather was the most difficult part," says Perezluha, 18. "Sometimes my body wanted to stop, but I knew I had to keep going. I couldn't let myself down."

Perezluha and Chew crossed into Alaska on Aug. 6, 47 days after leaving Pittsburgh.

"Everything started to set in when we saw the 'Welcome to Alaska' sign," Perezluha says. "It was an incredible natural high to know

that we finally made it."

But the journey was just beginning for Perezluha and Chew. The two rested a few days, then got back on their bikes to begin the trek home. This time, they took a different route, entering the United States in Nighthawk, Wash., and working their way back to Florida.

The pair survived several setbacks along the way, including food poisoning, flat tires, icy roads and two crashes. In Colorado, Perezluha had to buy a new bike after discovering that his front tube was cracked.

They made it to Perezluha's home

on Oct. 31, 133 days and 12,510 miles after leaving Pittsburgh.

"It was definitely hard at times, but I felt such a huge sense of accomplishment," Perezluha says. "Anyone can jump on a plane to Alaska, but not many people can say they rode their bike there."

Perezluha, who has been cycling for three years, says he was inspired by the movie and book *Into the Wild*, which tells the true story of a man's spiritual journey into the Alaskan wilderness.

He trained for the trip for about a year, riding nearly every day, and putting in 200 miles or more on Saturdays.

"Kids at school thought I was crazy," he says. "But I knew I could do it."

The Orlando Sentinel recently chronicled Perezluha's journey in a two-part series. The second article, which ran Nov. 17, is [available on the Sentinel's Web site](#).

On Dec. 5, Perezluha finished first in the 100-mile category of the Seminole County South Rotary Club's Holiday Hundred charity bike tour with a personal-best, non-drafting time of four hours and 39 minutes. Members of Seminole State's Mathematics Department sponsored him,

contributing money to cover his entry fee.

Proceeds from the bike tour, which started and ended at the College, were used to purchase bicycles and helmets for underprivileged children. The bikes will be given away before Christmas at Seminole State's Sanford/Lake Mary Campus. Seminole State is a sponsor of the event.

Photo: Steven Perezluha (left) and fellow cyclist Luther Davis, a physics teacher at Lake Mary High School, get ready to begin the the Holiday Hundred charity bike tour on Dec. 5.