



**Northland Pioneer College
Friends & Family Inc.**

Expanding Opportunities, Empowering Students

News Release

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Cycling For a Cause

Pedal the Petrified 2026 raises \$44,000 for Student Scholarships

The last weekend of September is glorious in northeastern Arizona. A perfect time for festivals, car shows, and cycling through the Petrified Forest National Park to raise money for scholarships for students at Northland Pioneer College (NPC).

On September 26th, for the 14th year in a row, NPC Friends & Family, the non-profit foundation that supports students at NPC, hosted Pedal the Petrified.

Two hundred twenty-three cyclists completed either a metric half-century ride (50 km/31 mi) or a full metric century (100 km/63 mi) ride, transversing the full length of Petrified Forest National Park. There is no competition, no winners or losers, just 223 riders biking through the splendor of the national park.

This year the ride raised over \$44,000 for scholarships for students attending NPC. According to NPCFF Executive Director Jesse Reeck, "These funds go directly to student support at the college. Our foundation provides over \$100,000 in scholarships and grants every semester. We also pay for GED testing fees, fund mini grants to pilot student success initiatives, and house an Emergency Fund to provide aid to students facing an unexpected need. Pedal the Petrified is our premier fundraiser of the year and is critical to making our work possible."

The ride gathers participants of all ages from across the country. The youngest this year was 14 years old, and the oldest two were 82. Cyclists came from all corners of Arizona, our immediately



Over 200 cyclists enjoyed a beautiful fall day and the enchantment of the Petrified Forest National Park during this year's Pedal the Petrified event.

surrounding states, and from farther afield: Texas, Kansas, Oklahoma, Michigan, Illinois, and New York.

This year's ride started with a continental breakfast outside the Painted Desert Inn and a welcome from both NPC President Dr. Von Lawson and the Superintendent of Petrified Forest National Park, Vernon Cody. Riders launched an hour before the Park opened, enjoying sunrise over the Painted Desert and early morning roads free of traffic. This year's event highlighted 100 Years of Route 66 at the first rest stop, and other stops celebrated USA250, Disney's Cars, aliens, and Star Wars themes.



Michael and Donna White ride in unison on their 14th Pedal the Petrified ride.

Michael and Donna White of Phoenix have ridden in every Pedal the Petrified event since its inception. They are a tandem cycling duo with a combined age of 155. Michael said, "We had anticipated last year that the 2025 Petrified might be our last. However, we enjoyed last year's ride so much that we said, "One more time!" So, we again went through the effort of getting ourselves and our tandem up from Phoenix for this one last hurrah." He continued, "I think this year's event was the best, which is saying something. The final crowning jewel this year was the fine array of food and beverage selections on course and at the finish! A+! We enjoyed the day so much that we find ourselves thinking maybe, just maybe, we could do it all again next year!"

An expansive group of volunteers from NPC and the community staff the ride. Reeck commented, "We have the most incredible volunteers providing food, logistical and technical support, traffic coordination, shuttle driving, cheering, setting up and breaking down, and more! Our participants consistently tell us that our volunteers are cheerful, helpful, and fun. We take great pride in welcoming folks to our beautiful land and community. This is a chance for us to show off!"

Pedal the Petrified is much more than a bike ride; it is a celebration of Northeastern Arizona, Northland Pioneer College, and the beautiful NPC Family of students, faculty, staff, and community volunteers that make this such a vibrant, extraordinary place.

Many local partners sponsored the ride. Their contributions allow 100% of the registration fees, rider donations and fundraising to go back to students. Summit Healthcare and La Posada have sponsored the ride annually for over a decade. This year, the Navajo County Board of Supervisors, Basha's Community Giving, and SPS+ Architects all joined the principal sponsors list. Many local companies also contributed food and

supplies, including Einstein Bros Bagels, The Pour Station, Owens Energy, The Mesa Restaurant, Nackard Pepsi, and the Holbrook Chamber of Commerce.

To learn more about NPC Friends and Family, get involved in a volunteer effort, or to make a tax-deductible donation, please visit www.npc.edu/npcfriendsfamily or contact npcff@npc.edu. To apply for an NPCFF scholarship, visit www.npc.edu/ffscholarships.



Cyclists meet and enjoy refreshments at one of the many SAG stops along the Pedal the Petrified route.