

Woman bicycling across the country pauses in Oberlin

By STEPHANIE DeCAMP
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Ever been bored, and not really sure what you wanted out of life? Ever decided to ride a bike across the country to fix that?

Becca Rolon is from Raleigh, N.C., and that's exactly what she's doing. There's no cause to "raise awareness" for, she said; the trip is "just for kicks."

"I wanted to do something that was challenging," she said Thursday when she popped into *The Oberlin Herald* office. "I wanted to figure out exactly what I want out of life. It's given me a lot of time to just be in my head; I ride for about seven hours a day. I also really wanted to see a lot of the country, so it's nice to see it at my own pace."

So far, she's been through Virginia, Kentucky, Illinois, Missouri and Kansas – and she's headed for Washington. And what has stood out the most to her on these travels?

The people.
"Actually, every night I've met a cool family," she said. "Every single night. One time I was at a Dairy Queen, and I was by myself, and someone came up to me and was like, 'The wind is really strong to be biking today.' And so I said, 'Oh, I've been biking since Virginia.' And we just got to talking, and then she ended up getting me a motel and then I ended up hanging out for the rest of the night with her and her husband. They took me out to dinner ... it was very random; I wasn't expecting it. It's been all nice people on this trip; I haven't met one mean person."

"A lot of people have reached out to me, to tell me that it's an inspiration and they realize how much good there is in this country, because so many people are all so focused on the bad stuff and no one ever hears about the good stuff."

She hasn't even gotten any flak for being a woman, she said, though it does concern some people.

"A guy alone can take care of himself, but a woman alone concerns people," said Sally May, who along with her husband Robert, took Miss Rolon in when she asked if she could set up her tent in their yard.

"I have a mace and a knife," Miss Rolon said, "but have never felt compelled to use them. I mean, I don't think I come off as threatening when I walk up and knock on a door for help. Usually what I'll do is I'll bike and I'll try to find a park or somewhere to sleep, but if I can't find anything, I'll just knock on someone's door and ask if I can sleep in their yard. So far, I've slept in one park. Otherwise I've slept in people's yards, but most of them tell me to come in. I've only slept outside three times in the last 31 days."

"When she comes to the door," Mrs. May said, laughing, "it's like a breath of fresh air. It's like, 'Oh no, you're not sleeping in the tent! You're coming in!'"

"I've learned a lot about myself on this trip," Miss Rolon said, "just through other people, because again, I'm in my head for seven or eight hours a day. And so just thinking about the really good people I've met inspires me to be the best person I can be."

"I've wanted to do this trip probably for four or five years, and everyone thought I was crazy, and I think people still think I'm crazy. I don't think people understand the reason behind it, to do something that is so different, so challenging that it challenges everything about yourself, and even challenges other people, as well. I mean, I'm challenging strangers everyday to open up their kindness and their hearts."

You can check out Miss Rolon's travels and meet the people she's stayed with through her blog, at www.crazyguyonabike.com/cyclingnomad.



WITH HER TRUSTY BIKE and camping tent in tow, Becca Rolon stopped in Oberlin on her trek of self-discovery across America. Miss Rolon said she began in Yorktown, Va., and plans to end her trip in Washington state. — Herald staff photo by Stephanie DeCAMP

Juvenile services reports on four programs for kids

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It's the one phone call you never want to get as a parent: "We've arrested your child, they've committed a crime and you need to come pick them up because they're in trouble."

Breathe deep—it's not the end of the world. Peggy Pratt, director of Northwest Kansas Juvenile Services, works with the Kansas Department for Children and Families, covering 17 counties. If it's any comfort, she says the agency has a program set up to help your child learn from their mistakes and get back to normal as soon as possible (and without a criminal record, if they behave).

Mrs. Pratt made her annual report to the Decatur County commissioners March 5, outlining the four programs available for kids who get caught breaking the law. There's first-time offender diversion, formal diversion, juvenile intensive-supervision probation and finally, the case management program for repeat offenders.

"The first program we have is the first-time offender diversion program," Mrs. Pratt said. "It's for misdemeanors, like theft, minor in possession or a fight. The child admits guilt, and is then on the program for 90 days with an 8 p.m. curfew, visits once a week at school (by their diversion officer), and most importantly, they must pass all their classes, which has been really successful. We don't let them quit school."

"Our programs are especially designed to get the kids through high school. The kids will get tutors, regular classes and Internet classes at night so they can keep up and catch up. They have their appointments for mental health care and stuff, and they get jobs in the community."

If a child is successful in the diversion program, she said, then they don't end up with a criminal record. On top of the visits, curfew and school work, they will be assigned community service, letters of apology to the victims, a written paper on the impact of their crime, and if it's warranted, behavioral services such as therapy.

The entire program, she said, is meant for "low-risk" offenders—good kids who made a mistake they have to pay for. Most are between the ages of 14 to 17, she said. They are tracked for about a year after they complete the program to make sure they don't slip up again, and

94 percent of them don't.
"One of the ways to show that (the community) does care about these kids is with this program," she said. "We care that you don't have a criminal history, but also care that you don't do these things."

Second-time offenders, Mrs. Pratt said, go on the formal diversion program. Kids who get to this point have to actually go to court and are sentenced to the program, and once again, if they're successful, it won't go on their criminal record. However, it can be a lot tougher to complete. It's twice as long, she said—usually about six months.

"I always review the cases when they close," she said, "and with almost all the kids, you can really see a change in their thinking, their relationships with parents and their attitudes. When we ask what the worst part of the program is, almost all of them say the curfew."

The next two programs are for kids who are chronic offenders or have bigger problems, like substance abuse or neglect in the home. These programs are exactly what they're called—intense. If a child can't complete the intensive supervision probation program successfully, they can be put into case management, which will put them in a foster home or rehabilitation of some kind.

"When a juvenile is on intensive probation," Mrs. Pratt said, "this is their last opportunity to follow the laws and the orders of the court. We give them cognitive-based programming such as 'Thinking for a Change' to help them make short- and long-term decisions that will keep them out of the court system and in their community."

If every program fails however, and a child is taken into the custody of the state, they will enter the case management program. This is when a child will be assigned a foster home, which is chosen specifically to care for juvenile offenders.

They're usually placed in homes that are close to treatment centers so that the kids can attend outpatient drug and alcohol treatment, therapy, or even sex-offender treatment if they need it. Many of these kids are very behind in school, she said, so a lot of their treatment focuses on trying to help them graduate.



Peggy Pratt



A TURKEY PERMIT is good for one bearded turkey, like the one above, according to the Kansas Department of Wildlife, Parks and Tourism. This year, you can also get a tag for a second turkey. — Photo from Kansas Department of Wildlife, Parks and Tourism.

Two turkeys allowed this year

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Hunters yearning for more turkey on their dinner plates this year will be happy to hear that with the opening of this turkey season, they can now bring home two of the birds.

Hunters must first have a Kansas hunting license, said Tyson Garrison of Oberlin, who works for Crop Production Services and hunts turkey every year. In Decatur County, licenses are available at Dale's Fish 'N' Fun or online at kdwpt.state.ks.us/news/License-Permits.

A turkey permit will allow you one bearded tom turkey in the spring and one hen in the fall, Mr. Garrison said.

"In the fall, you can kill a hen, but in the spring it's toms only," he said. "I bought the combo for \$26, that allows for two birds. A game tag is just for your second bird. The money all goes to the Kansas Department of Wildlife and Parks."

Once you've got the paperwork squared away, it's time for the hunt.

"Usually you go out the night before to scout," Mr. Garrison said. "You find out where they roost, then you set up somewhat close to it before daylight, first thing

in morning. You set up some decoys, wait for them to fly down and hope you can call them in."

The decoys look like hens and toms, or a jake, which is a first-year tom.

"What you're trying to do is trick the tom into thinking you're going to steal his girlfriend," Mr. Garrison chuckled.

"There are so many different calls on the market, it's hard to count. There are diaphragm calls, box calls and slate calls. They tell the birds different things with clucks, purrs, tree yelps, all different kinds of things... And then you hammer down."

Once you've got your bird, it's up to you what to do with it, though Mr. Garrison said that he's partial to the breast.

"What you do with it depends on how big it is," he said. "If it's really big, I mount it. Or you can cut the tail off for a wall hanging, but we definitely eat them. It doesn't take long to eat them. I just eat the breast because the legs and all are pretty tough when they're wild. You have to cook it slower, too."

Turkey season opened April 1, for archery, hand-capped and youth hunters. As of last Wednesday, it's also open for firearms hunting through May 31.

Rexford dairy wins K-State award

McCarty Family Farms recently won another honor when Tom and Judy McCarty were named as Agriculture Leaders of the Year by Kansas State University's Huck Boyd National Institute for Rural Development.

Earlier this year, McCarty Farms received the Innovative Dairy Farmer of the Year Award from the International Dairy Foods Association and Dairy Today magazine.

The K-State award honors Kansans who "demonstrated a high level of innovation, hard work and service to rural Kansas and beyond," said Renee Shaw, chair of the institute's board. The Leaders of the Year were selected by students at K-State's College of Business,

she said.
The McCartys, along with sons Clay, Mike, David and Ken, were part of a long-time dairy family in Pennsylvania. When they needed room to grow in the 1990s, they relocated to Rexford and built a new dairy.

Today, after expansions in Bird City and Scott City, McCarty milks about 7,200 cows.

The family operates a milk processor and evaporator at Rexford with an exclusive rights agreement to provide all of the condensed skim milk for the Dannon Yogurt plant in Fort Worth. Each day, three tankers of condensed milk travel from Rexford to Texas for processing.

"Tom and Judy McCarty took a

risk and moved from rural Pennsylvania to the plains of Kansas in 1999 to give their four sons the opportunity to fulfill their goals to be dairy farmers," said state Secretary of Agriculture Dale Rodman. "Thirteen years later, McCarty Family Farms has become an innovative leader in the Kansas dairy industry and a key component in three western Kansas communities, creating steady jobs that are a boost to rural economics."

McCarty's Rexford location recently completed the Validus Certified Responsible Producer certification, an animal-welfare training program. Fewer than 25 dairies nationwide have this certification, the family said.



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