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Skid Row Runners to Bike Across the United States

The story about the Superior Court Judge and a group of homeless individuals running together continues as they take on a new challenge. On Saturday, July 6, at 6 am, they will embark on a journey to ride bicycles 3500 miles across the United States to New York City. This is not just a physical challenge but a testament to the power of a supportive community in recovery and overcoming homelessness. Their journey is a call to action, a reminder of just how essential a supportive community is to be successful in recovery and to overcome homelessness.

Ten people, comprised of Midnight Mission alums, mentors, recovering addicts, and other formerly homeless people, will leave for New York City on Saturday, July 6, from the Santa Monica pier at 6 am. If you are interested in interviewing the group, please let us know ASAP.

The ride will be unsupported, with no follow vehicle. Riding 100 miles a day, everyone will carry what they need. For the first five days, the ten courageous riders will be accompanied by 10-15 Skid Row Running Club members, including members of the LAPD. These riders will be picked up on day five and transported back to Los Angeles. On their six-week journey, they will be spreading the message that with a supportive community, those who previously suffered from addiction and homelessness can become extremely valuable members of our community.

Every member riding the cross-country journey is in recovery from a substance abuse problem or was formerly homeless, including Judge Mitchell, who lived in his car to make ends meet. Each has faced insurmountable circumstances they were able to overcome with the support of a loving community. The riders hope to bring awareness to communities across the nation.

About the Skid Row Running Club: In 2012, the running club was formed as part of the Healthy Living Program at The Midnight Mission (TMM) through the collaborative efforts of LA Superior Court Judge Craig Mitchell and The Midnight Mission. Despite seemingly insurmountable obstacles in the first year, this group of committed athletes participated in events including the Firecracker 10k, Los Angeles and Pasadena Rock n' Roll Half marathons, and the LA Marathon, among others. It would soon become an annual journey for the runners, competing across the globe in various international marathons.

Since 2013, Judge Mitchell and the top runners have been running in several international marathons. They ran in the Accra International Marathon in Ghana, Africa. The following year, they ran in the 2015 Maratona Di Roma. The Rome group was comprised of alums of The Midnight's Recovery Program, including the original



(3) participants, an alumna of HomeLight Family Living, current Midnight Mission Recovery Program participants, and a dozen community members, making the group 25 strong. In 2016, a team made up of (6) program participants, (2) alums, and (15) dedicated runners from our community ran in the DaNang International Marathon in Vietnam. They were shadowed by Mark and Gabriele Hayes, the same film crew that followed them to Ghana, and are behind the Skid Row Marathon documentary (<http://skidrowmarathon.com/>), which had been tracking their progress and personal stories since the beginning.

In 2018, a team made up of (39) dedicated runners, including (12) MM program participants, (3) MM alums and (6) in recovery outside of TMM, (18) mentors, and an additional (5) spouses/non-runners ran the Jerusalem Marathon in Israel. And, in 2023, sixty people, comprised of Midnight Mission participants and alums, community members, and mentors, ran the New Delhi Marathon in India.

About The Midnight Mission's Health and Wellness Program: Health & Wellness at The Midnight encourages physical health through fitness classes and exercise opportunities designed to improve the physical, social, and emotional health of all participants. Participating in the Healthy Living program emphasizes the importance of life-long healthy practices. Homelessness is associated with social isolation and lack of healthy contact with others. Men entering the program learn to respect and help each other through sports and community activities. Team sports, including basketball, ping pong, volleyball, and social games, offer additional ways for them to develop social skills.

As part of the Health & Wellness department, the running club is offered to each of our participants so that their physical health enhances their sobriety and improves their chances of sustainable recovery and ongoing healthy living. Judge Mitchell and Skid Row Running Club (<http://www.skidrowrunningclub.com/>) can be found each Monday and Thursday at 5:45 am in the lobby at The Midnight Mission. The club is open to the community, and all are welcome. For more information about the Running Club or our Health and Wellness program, please contact Christopher Booker via email at cbooker@midnightmission.org or call 213.624.9258 ext.1661

About The Midnight Mission: Founded in 1914, The Midnight Mission offers paths to self-sufficiency to individuals and families who have lost direction. Our emergency services and 12-step recovery, family living, job training, education and workforce development programs offer a compassionate bridge to achieve and maintain healthy, productive lives. We remove obstacles and provide the accountability and structure that people experiencing homelessness need to be productive in their communities. Our conviction and commitment to their success define us. For additional information, please visit www.midnightmission.org.