

SUNY Oneonta Senior About to Pass Through Muscatine, Iowa, on Cross-Country Bike Adventure

Written by Lisa Miller
Monday, 17 June 2013 08:07

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After 18 days on the road—including a day off in Wabash, Ind., during the derecho that walloped the Midwest this week —SUNY Oneonta senior Jami Haynes is heading toward a major milestone on her cross-country bicycling adventure: crossing the Mississippi River.

Haynes expects to arrive June 19 in Muscatine, Iowa, where she will cross the river and begin the next leg of her journey to San Francisco. Accompanied by her boyfriend and sister, Haynes, 21, set off May 28 from her home in Central Bridge, N.Y., on a 4,200-mile, cross-country bike trip with two goals: to “have the adventure of our lives” and to raise awareness about the Harvest of Hope Foundation, an organization that provides emergency assistance to migrant workers and their families.

An avid runner and hiker, Haynes got the idea for the “Miles for Migrants” bike tour after Harvest of Hope founder and President Phil Kellerman visited one of her education classes this past semester. Her 20-year-old sister, Jena, signed on for the adventure, and then her boyfriend, Caleb Grippin, 23, joined the team.

“I wasn’t very familiar with what a migrant farm worker was and how they contributed to American society, and I was especially touched as a future educator by the support that Harvest of Hope gives to these families and the scholarships that the foundation provides,” Haynes said.

The class did a service-learning project to benefit Harvest of Hope, and Haynes kept the momentum going. She and her sister organized a spaghetti supper, several bake sales and a raffle, as well as giving presentations about Harvest of Hope on campus and in the community. “Spreading awareness of the foundation and how it helps migrant farm workers has been extremely rewarding,” Haynes said. “The community definitely knows a lot more about the contributions of migrant workers because of this project.”

To continue raising awareness, Haynes has been meeting with media outlets along the route and handing out “Miles for Migrants” cards to people she meets. She is also chronicling her adventures throughout the 11-week journey on the blog: www.crazyguyonabike.com/sistahbikers

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The Harvest of Hope Foundation was established in 1997, when Kellerman worked at ESCORT, a migrant education resource center based at SUNY Oneonta. In addition to its affiliation with ESCORT, SUNY Oneonta has operated a College Assistance Migrant Program (CAMP) since 2001. Created in 1972, CAMP is a federally-funded scholarship program that helps students from migrant and seasonal farm-working families pursue higher education. ESCORT senior programmer analyst Bob Thomas, a friend of Kellerman's, loaned Haynes and her crew three touring bikes and trailers. Thomas, who completed a cross-country bicycling trip himself back in 1976, was on hand for the send-off Tuesday, offering last-minute tips and advice.

An elementary education major with a concentration in social studies, Haynes will share experiences from her trip this fall as a student teacher at Cobleskill Elementary School.

About Harvest of Hope

Located in Gainesville, Fla., The Harvest of Hope Foundation is a nonprofit 501(c) 3 organization that has been providing migrant farm workers and their families with emergency relief and financial assistance for more than 15 years. As of Oct. 1, 2012, Harvest of Hope had distributed over \$1 million to migrant farm workers, seasonal farm workers and their families for severe or life-threatening situations. The foundation's services include health care, housing and transportation assistance; monthly hardship expenses; and even replacement clothing. Harvest of Hope also issues grants to migrant service-oriented organizations, provides migrant students with scholarships and tuition assistance, and dispenses financial aid to migrant farm workers and seasonal agricultural workers throughout the United States.

About SUNY Oneonta

Established as a state normal school in 1889 and incorporated as a founding member of the State University of New York system in 1948, SUNY Oneonta is well known for its strong academic programs and community service and character-building opportunities. Nearly 20 percent of the student body volunteers through the nationally known Center for Social Responsibility and Community, and service-learning activities are incorporated across many academic disciplines. Recognized by the Carnegie Foundation for excellence in community engagement, the college enrolls 6,000 students in its 70 undergraduate majors and 15 graduate programs.

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