Please, donate your blood before you will regretfully think:
"If I knew I would have given it before I needed it"

Julien Leblay just turned 16 on August 27, 1997. When he had a serious accident on a tractor. He swung back into a ravine, made two somersaults in the tractor, was thrown out and landed on the ground. His lungs were severely damaged. A blood transfusion and 2 days in an induced coma were necessary to begin to heal his lungs. He also needed huge amounts of blood to stay alive. For four days he lingered between life and death. Eventually he recovered his health.

"Thankfully, I'm alive today. I'll never forget those persons who dedicate their life to others: firemen, in particular, medical teams that give their best and also those who decided to give their blood to save lives. This near to death experience made a big impression in my life and turned me into a more conscious and stronger person aware of real life values."

"*I was 18 when I proudly went to give my blood at university, but the Doctor announced it is something I will never be able to do again. Unfortunately, in France, people cannot give their own blood once they have received a transfusion. That was a real shock to understand I will never be able to contribute my blood to save other people lives*."

When he was released from the hospital, Julien rode a bicycle to improve his respiratory capacities. He began to ride in the Alps. As a transfused and cyclist, he thought about Blood Donation. These trips would be a great opportunity to make people aware of the importance of giving blood, of saving lives. He decided to make bike tours to encourage blood donation.

Julien has ridden worldwide (Europe, New Zealand, South America and Balkans) to promote blood donation. Blood donations are organized and publicized in the countries where he travels.

The Rotary Club of Clermont-Ferrand, in France, has been Julien Leblay's, a former member of a Rotaract Club, partner since the beginning of his organization, *Voyageurs au Grand Coeur*, (The Heart Travelers) in 2004. This rotary club sends emails to other rotary club along their way. Some of the clubs made accommodates for two riders in their city and sometimes even organize everything for them to promote blood donations.

Here is an excerpt from Julien's account of his experience in La Paz, Bolivia during their journey through South America beginning in November 2007:

> *The function of Rotary International is to help those in distress. For example, the La Paz San Jorge Rotary Club provided lodging for us when we arrived there. Additionally they put heart and soul in to organizing all the communiqués to help develop a culture of giving blood in Bolivia.*
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> *In this capital, an average of only two people a day gave blood voluntarily for common use before my visit. The other donors gave for their families only. (It was the same principle as that in the eastern Balkan countries that I visited this summer. If you need a transfusion, you have to find blood donors from among the people you know.) So ,the Rotary president contacted the blood bank, and together they prepared a marathon program for my short stay here that would help educate the population about the need for donor blood.*

> *One interview was in the studios of the national TV station. There, the programming director gave blood live while one of his colleagues interviewed us. It was incredible! The idea was to find the most effective way to show people that giving blood takes only ten minutes! The next day, – more TV and radio journalists, with a female journalist also giving her blood live during the interview. In total, there were 13 interviews for television, two for radio, and three for the papers. It was an exceptional media event which bore the fruits of its labors. The second day at noon, 30 people came to the blood bank to donate.*
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> *As an added bonus this will allow the La Paz San Jorge Rotary Club to be involved with the promotion of blood donation. They have committed to helping the blood bank increase donor numbers. The next course of action is to work towards establishing a mobile blood bank bus to facilitate blood drives in universities, businesses and other organizations*

The write up above is translated from Leblay's description of his trip from Lima. Peru to Ushuaia, Argentina from November 2007 to March 2008. It was a journey of 11,200 kilometers through the Andes Mountains.

> *Not being able to donate my blood anymore, my bike tours are the only way I found to return the favor to generous and unknown blood donors who saved my life.*
> *Thanks again for such a gift.*
> *Please, donate your blood before you will regretfully think:*
> *"If I knew I would have given it before I needed it*

Quotes from Julien Leblay
President of foundation les Voyageurs au grand Coeur
http://voyage-grand-coeur.org

When Julien returns to France from one of his trips, he gives speeches throughout the country. This past year alone he gave 100 presentations. Some of them are to Rotary clubs. During these presentations, Julien shows what kind of trip he was on and how Rotary International helped him.