Julien Leblay's relationship with Rotary

The Rotary Club of Clermont-Ferrand, in France, has been Julien Leblay's partner since the beginning of his organization, *Voyageurs au Grand Coeur*, (The Heart Travelers) in 2004. Before Julien and his partner, Febien, began one of their long tours this rotary club sent 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. In some cases this was fantastic for the riders and the cause. 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, who are caught in the clutches of sickness or poverty. 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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> *To achieve this, there was a lot of work to do. 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, Jaime 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.*

During my first few days there were over a dozen interviews for the radio, newspapers, and television. The day ended at 10:30 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.

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

That night, I had dinner with the Rotary Club; they are a very active club, and I owe them my thanks. Here more than ever, the Rotary Club has shown itself to be efficient and generous. My sojourn in La Paz was exceptional because they were involved.

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.

When Julien returns to France from, 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 the trip he was on and how Rotary helped him.