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MSC 3603, Harrisonburg, VA 22807-0002

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Make 3,000 miles in 8 weeks, one cause

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3,000 miles, 8 weeks, one cause

As a 2012 intern at the National Institutes of Health, JMU biology major **Navid Attayan ('13)** researched new molecular targets to treat neuroblastoma, a rare but deadly form of childhood cancer. The research, published in *Clinical Cancer Research*, was interesting and challenging, but it was his interaction with the children and their families that really touched Attayan's heart.

He wanted to do more and, soon after, ProJeKT 3000 was born. The pre-med student wanted a challenge. An avid cyclist, Attayan planned to bike from Virginia to California – 3,000 miles – to raise



funds and awareness for pediatric cancer research and for the families affected by neuroblastoma. The rare – but most common infant cancer – neuroblastoma primarily affects children under the age of 5. It accounts for 15 percent of all types of pediatric cancer deaths. After a year of planning, numerous awareness drives at JMU, and rigorous physical training,

Attayan set out alone on May 25 from downtown Harrisonburg. Riding an average of 70 miles a day without the comforts of daily hotels or companions, he crossed into the Midwest plains, tackled 12,000-foot mountain passes and survived long stretches of western deserts. During his 3,000-mile trek he visited with cancer patients and hospital staffs to create as much awareness as he could about the heartbreaking disease. Nearly 150,000 fans tracked his progress on ProJeKT 3000's Facebook page and many donated money to the cause. On July 12, Attayan reached his destination, San Diego, Calif., eight days shy of eight weeks. His heart-pounding effort is changing the lives of thousands of young cancer victims, and the effort will continue, he says.

Read more at the JMU Be the Change blog (jmbethechange.wordpress.com) and see how one small idea can become one huge movement.



BE *the* CHANGE

PHOTOGRAPHS COURTESY
OF NAVID ATTAYAN ('13)

Be the Change for a brighter future! www.jmu.edu/BetheChange