



For Immediate Release

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Race Across America with Team Kalyra Women's Cycling

**Four unstoppable women, a crew of 16 dedicated insomniacs,
one great cause and a new world record!**

[Santa Barbara, CA] In June, Team Kalyra Women's Cycling of Santa Barbara, CA will embark on an extraordinary journey that will test the utmost limits of physical stamina, mental resilience, and commitment to a cause.

Outfitted in bright pink gear and several 2009 U.S. National Master Championship titles, the "Pink Hurricane" of Team Kalyra, Jill Gass, Avalon Jenkins-Balker, Lisa Tonello, and Sonia Ross, will be taking on the ultimate endurance racing challenge by competing in [Race Across America](#) (RAAM) June 12-17, 2010 from Oceanside, CA to Annapolis, MD. The goal of their inspiring, 6 ½-day crossing is to set a new world record time while raising \$100,000 for Girls Inc of Greater Santa Barbara.

The clock starts in Oceanside, CA on Saturday June 12, 2010 and doesn't stop until the team reaches the finish line in Annapolis, MD over 3,000 miles and 110,000 vertical feet of climbing away. Unlike the other famous races, like the Tour de France, RAAM is not a staged race; it is a non-stop, continuous race in which cyclists can race in either the solo or the team division. Teams take turns riding in a relay fashion and usually cross the country in the span of six to nine days, averaging between 350 to 500 miles per day with each rider sleeping not more than 2 hours per day.

The racers of Team Kalyra hold multiple state and national championship cycling titles and have an average age of over 50 years old. Each has overcome personal challenges and prioritized athletic excellence to pursue the dream of a record-setting crossing of the United States. Jill Gass, herself a critical care nurse at Cottage hospital, underwent heart surgery less than 2 years ago. Avalon Jenkins-Balker, a world-ranked track sprinter in the mid-1980s, raised three children on her own and, in the last four years, has lost over 220 lbs while mentoring her youngest daughter to a cycling national championship title. In addition to working full time, Lisa Tonello has balanced her training schedule with a thriving family life and part-time care of her autistic grandson.

The team is training in the full expectation of breaking the world record for a four-woman team of six days, 18 hours, and 34 minutes. In 2007 the team completed the 3,000+ miles of RAAM in seven days, six hours, 24 minutes on their first attempt. This year, they are back and even faster than before.

Aligning with Girl's Inc mission of inspiring girls of all ages to be *smart, strong, and bold*, RAAM presents an unbeatable opportunity for the four women of Team Kalyra to prove that girls of all ages can achieve and overcome on all levels when given the confidence, skills and courage to do so. The Team has approached the athletic and personal challenges of RAAM head on, knowing that RAAM is much more than a bike race - it transforms everyday people into epic adventurers. It will be an experience of a lifetime as they journey across the country, each racer proving her ability as a tough, enduring competitor.

Meet the [RAAM riders](http://teamkalyra.com/about/raam-riders) <http://teamkalyra.com/about/raam-riders>

It takes more than determined riders to compete in the most grueling endurance race in the world. Equally important is the formidable 16-member crew. In many ways the crew has an even more difficult job than the riders. The complex logistics, and emotional and physical fatigue of keeping the riders cared for and racing, is immense. Assembling from across the country, most of the crew are RAAM veterans and understand what it takes to keep the riders on the road, motivated, and fast. With a winning combination of competitiveness, talent, and incredible sense of humor Team Kalyra's crew will be hard to beat.

[Meet the RAAM Crew](http://teamkalyra.com/about/raam-crew) <http://teamkalyra.com/about/raam-crew>

The strategy: DON'T STOP. EVER. Through desert heat, mountain passes and sleepless nights, the team will cover approximately 500 miles a day, and in relay fashion, each rider will average six hours a day on the bike. When on the road, efforts are solo. No drafting, no excuses -- just the rider, the bike, and all of the United States to cross. For safety, a team follow vehicle is behind the rider on the road at all times, day and night.

Established in 1982, RAAM is an event so staggering that merely to finish is, for most, the accomplishment of a lifetime. Previous competitors have included ultra-endurance cyclists of all ages, backgrounds and nationalities. More than half of the riders who start out in California never make it to the East Coast. Few people have achieved the prestige of being designated a RAAM Finisher. Three of Team Kalyra's four riders have attained this title in previous RAAM events.

"The fact that we are women, or are 50 years old, or have full time jobs and family is not a limitation to reaching our goals. I race to inspire women and girls to believe in their own power and to bring attention to the great work that Girls Inc is doing to help girls grow into amazing young women." (Avalon Jenkins-Balker, Team Kalyra racer & mother of 3)

"RAAM is the ultimate test for an endurance cyclist. Physically, emotionally, logistically – there is nothing that can compare to the challenge of racing non-stop across the United States. We learned a great deal in our previous RAAM, and are even more prepared this year as individuals and as a team. It won't be easy, but we have our sights set on a new record." (Jill Gass, Team Kalyra rider and captain)

Follow the story at <http://www.TeamKalyra.com>



1. Team Kalyra: Sonia Ross, Avalon Jenkins-Balker, Lisa Tonello, Jill Gass



2. Sonia Ross



3. Lisa Tonello