

GEORGIA

CYCLING ASSOCIATION

2024 ANNUAL REPORT



14

Talon's Ride

Cystic Fibrosis might shape his journey, but it doesn't define his ride



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A New Program

Georgia Cycling made an exciting announcement in 2024 that changed youth cycling in Georgia





hello

Dear Friends

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

Kenny Griffin

TEAMMTB DIRECTOR

Lisa Hayes

TRAIL RANGERS DIRECTOR

Mark Legaspi

MARKETING DIRECTOR

Mike Riviello

'GIRLS RIDE' MANAGER

Laura Lea Alonso

DEVELOPMENT & GRANTS MANAGER

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Sarah Johnson

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Scott Vanek
Darius Farrokhi

ANNUAL REPORT AUTHOR & DESIGNER

Mike Riviello

COPY EDITOR

Nicole Griffin

CONTRIBUTING PHOTOGRAPHERS

Karl Moore, Darius Farrokhi,
Steve Mogan, and Adam Pethel

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What a transformative year it has been. 2024 was a once-in-a-generation experience for our team: executing our high standards of program production while simultaneously building and promoting an entirely new program. Our team, both the front office and event day staff, proved they were up for the challenge. You can read details about our new elementary-aged program and our outreach efforts starting on page 24. I look forward to sharing with you the success of this program in next year's report.

Our legacy program, now known as TeamMTB, for middle and high school students, continues to thrive. The 2024 season saw a record number of program participants elect to compete in the Northside Hospital Race Series. This makes us proud because it shows our student-athletes continue pushing themselves to rise to new challenges. That's what this organization is all about: personal growth and development.

A moment ago, I mentioned our event day staff. Georgia Cycling has one of the best teams ever assembled, I genuinely believe that. This crew doesn't see their job as a task list; they aim to leverage their role to make an impact on our athletes and their families. Each one of them is deeply connected to our mission. We are proud to have them as the

backbone of what we do as an organization. That's why we are highlighting this team of greatness in our Annual Report. You can see their names and get a behind-the-scenes look at a typical event day – spoiler alert, it starts early – for this crew, starting on page 22.

Throughout this report, you will hear directly from members of the Georgia Cycling family. These stories are ones of challenges and achievement, but they are also deeply personal. So, I thank everyone who took the time to share their experience with the aim of inspiring and motivating others.

At the heart of it all are allies like you. You are there with us every step of the way, propelling our mission forward and moving the needle on Georgia Cycling's impact.

We hope you enjoy this look at 2024 and everything that supporters like you make possible.

Kenny Griffin
Executive Director
Georgia Cycling Association
kenny@georgiacycling.org

TeamMTB: Where Every Student Rides

TeamMTB is the Georgia Cycling Association's youth mountain biking program for students in grades 6–12. Open to all public, private, and homeschool students across Georgia, the program welcomes riders of all skill levels—no tryouts, no cuts, no benches. This is a rare space in middle and high school sports because every student-athlete who wants to ride, rides.

What begins as an after-school activity, quickly becomes a transformative experience. Over the course of a five-month season, student-athletes train with one of 79 community based teams. These local teams gather several times each week for practices that focus on fitness, skills, trail safety, and teamwork. Whether a student is seeking personal growth, social connection, or an outlet for physical activity, TeamMTB provides a structured, supportive environment to help them thrive.

In the fall, riders may choose to compete in the **Northside Hospital Race Series**, a five-event statewide competition. Participation is optional, but incredibly popular—**84% of riders competed in at least one race in 2024**, a record high. For many, race weekends are less about podiums and more about community: teams camp together, cheer on fellow riders, and celebrate the shared joy of the sport.

TeamMTB promotes health, resilience, and personal discovery. Student-athletes push their limits, master new skills, and gain the confidence that comes from doing hard things. Just as importantly, they become part of a welcoming cycling community that celebrates effort over outcome and growth over glory.

The benefits go beyond physical fitness. A Stanford University study found that cycling improves executive function in children, activating brain regions tied to memory, focus, and decision-making—especially during the ride itself. Georgia Cycling sees these results play out on the trail: students become more confident, focused, and motivated, both on and off the bike.

Riding the Distance

Each year, we recognize 4-year (Gold) and 7-year (Platinum) riders for their long-term dedication to Georgia Cycling. These students represent the full arc of what we offer: confidence built over seasons, friendships formed on the trail, and a deep connection to a sport and community that grows with them. They are a powerful reflection of our mission because when a student chooses to return year after year, it means they've found a place where they're supported, challenged, and inspired.

In 2024, we graduated **66 Gold Riders** and **21 Platinum Riders**. We know they leave us not just as stronger riders, but as stronger people.



1,117

STUDENTS RODE WITH TeamMTB IN 2024



Our teams meet 2-3 times per week for trail rides where they focus on skill development, personal development, and team building.

TEAMMTB
GEORGIA CYCLING ASSOCIATION



407,201 MILES RIDDEN

That's like biking all the way to the moon and 70% of the way back to Earth!



191,123 HOURS RIDING

If you started pedaling those hours continuously backward in time, you'd end up in 2003!



696 COACHES

That's 1 coach for every 2 student-athletes, meaning kids get the attention they deserve!

THE ACCIDENTAL COACH

HOW A DAD'S SUPPORT OF HIS SON MORPHED INTO A PASSION FOR COACHING.



Father & Son Duo: Greg (R) and Will (L) Leftwich in 2023 at Will's last race at Dauset Nature Center.

Greg Leftwich didn't set out to become a mountain bike coach. In fact, if you'd asked him a few years ago about trail riding, he would have told you it wasn't even on his radar. But like so many others in the Georgia Cycling community, he got involved for one simple reason—his kid needed him.

"My son Will has severe food allergies," Greg explains. "My wife and I agreed early on—if Will was going to be out in the woods, one of us needed to be there, so at first, I was just the guy with the first aid kit, hanging in the background."

But it didn't stay that way for long.

From Tagalong to Trail Leader

Greg had already earned a Wilderness First Aid certification through the Boy Scouts, where he volunteered as an Assistant Scout Master. "That training made me valuable on day one," he says. "Coach Ben Carr invited me to ride with the group, and by the second practice, I was helping kids with basic bike skills and trail etiquette. Before I even realized it, I was coaching."

What began as a precaution quickly turned into a passion. "I loved being out there. Not just riding—I loved the way the program used mountain biking as a tool for growth. I saw kids becoming more confident, more resilient. I saw them cheer each other on. And I realized, I wanted to be a part of that."



COACHES DESERVE COACHING TOO!

Adults who show up for kids deserve the same support and encouragement we give our athletes. That's why we built one of the most comprehensive coach training systems in youth sports. We offer training tailored to everyone from a first-time coach to an experienced mentor. We're not just training coaches, we're investing in role models.

Anyone riding with a kid must complete foundational training plus an annual background check. In addition, digital training modules, in-person summits, and an online toolkit are designed to help coaches feel confident and prepared. **Because when coaches feel supported, kids thrive.**



Greg's first season was a learning curve—on and off the trail. "I wasn't a mountain biker," he says, laughing. "My first rides were humbling. But I had incredible support from other coaches and mentors in the Georgia Cycling community. They didn't care how fast I was or how technical my riding looked. They just cared that I was showing up for the kids."

That student-first culture made a deep impression. "The whole vibe was: this is about the kids. We're here to create a space where they can challenge themselves, feel supported, and learn to love movement."

A Family on the Sidelines and on the Trail

Greg's son Will flourished in that environment. He started on an old rigid Trek 830, struggling through his first few rides and races. But over time, his confidence and skills grew. "By senior year, Will was a totally different rider," Greg says. "He wasn't just stronger—he had a calm, focused way of handling the trail. He found joy in the challenge."

For the Leftwich family, mountain biking became a shared adventure.

Greg coached. His wife, Kimberly, was team mom, cheering on riders and making sure snacks, gear, and emotional support were always on hand. Their younger daughter, Audrey Jane, came to every race—even though her heart belongs to the theatre and not the bike. "We were a sideline family. A race-day team. It became a part of our life rhythm."

And even when Will graduated and moved on to college, Greg stayed.

Sticking Around and Leveling Up His Coaching Game

"I realized that this program gives me something, too," he reflects. "I've always believed in helping kids grow, but coaching with Georgia Cycling gave me a purpose beyond just being Will's dad. I learned quickly that my calling is working with youth through strong coaching programs. Every season, I learn something new—about riding, about leadership, and honestly, about myself."

Greg has since earned his Level 3 Coach certification and now mentors new coaches while continuing to lead student-

athletes on the trail. He attends Georgia Cycling's annual Leadership Summit Conference and is always ready to share his experience in an effort to get new coaches involved.

When asked what he tells parents who are thinking about becoming a mountain bike coach, Greg doesn't hesitate.

"I tell them: You don't have to be an expert. You don't have to have raced. If you care about kids and want to make an impact, there's a place for you here. Come ride bikes with us. Learn alongside your kids. You'll be amazed at what happens—for them and for you."

Looking back, Greg still calls himself an "accidental coach." But time has also revealed the truth behind that title: his story may have started by chance—but it continues by choice.

"Every time I see a kid clear an obstacle they thought was impossible, or finish a ride with a huge grin even though it was hard—it reminds me of why I keep coming back. It's about growth. It's about belonging. It's about becoming stronger together."



Left: Some NCCS teammates help with Will's Eagle Scout project of building benches at Allatoona Creek Park

Center: Will and his mom, Kimberly, who became a "team mom"

Right: Greg's good luck charm, socks featuring his son's face



Samuel Fontenot Pictures

For more of Samuel's pictures scan the QR code on page 11



On the bike & *behind the lens*

Samuel Fontenot and the Power of Adventure Riding

When Samuel Fontenot joined Georgia Cycling's Team Cartecay in 6th grade, he wasn't signing up to chase podiums. Over the next seven years, he found something even more powerful: improved health, meaningful friendships, and a unique way to contribute to his team. And he did it all without ever racing.

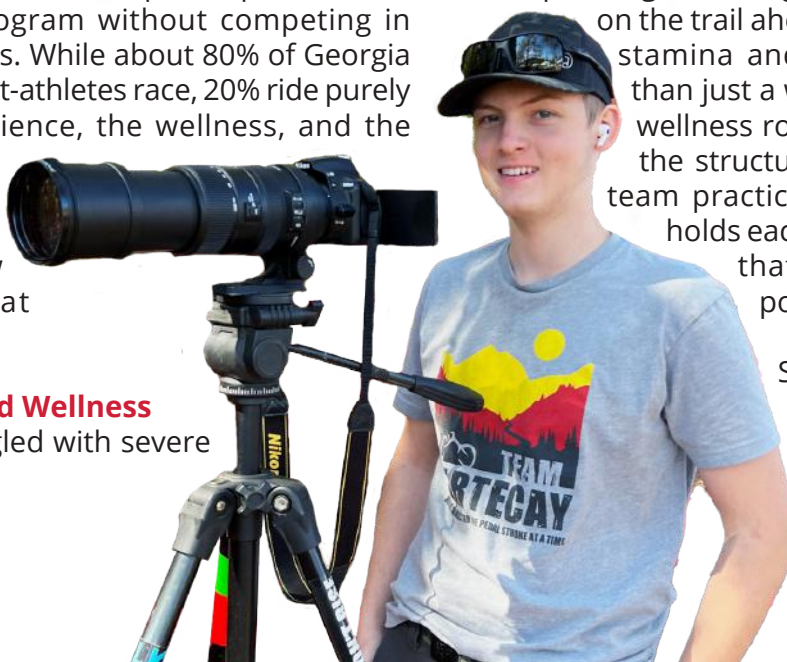
Samuel represents a vital part of the Georgia Cycling community: Adventure Riders—student-athletes who participate in the TeamMTB program without competing in the Race Series. While about 80% of Georgia Cycling student-athletes race, 20% ride purely for the experience, the wellness, and the community. Samuel's story shows us just how impactful that path can be.

Riding Toward Wellness
Samuel struggled with severe

asthma for much of his life. But through consistent time on the bike, his health transformed. "It wasn't until only a few years ago that I was able to truly overcome it," Samuel says. "Even on days I didn't feel like riding, I would always feel better after bike practice."

Mountain biking gave Samuel something a doctor couldn't prescribe: momentum. The act of pedaling, breathing deeply, and focusing on the trail ahead helped him build stamina and confidence. More than just a workout, it became a wellness routine. And thanks to the structure of mountain bike team practices, where everyone holds each other accountable, that routine became a powerful habit.

Samuel's experience reflects what the CDC has found:





regular physical activity during adolescence improves cardiovascular health, builds resilience, and reduces symptoms of anxiety and depression¹. At the team level within Georgia Cycling's TeamMTB program, riders receive these benefits through participation in riding, with or without competition, because all riders take part in the same activities during team practices.

His parents, Jennifer and Dondi, have seen those changes firsthand. "He quickly grew, both physically and mentally, gaining strength and skills every year through his senior season," they shared. "The friendships he made and the support from his coaches and teammates had a huge impact, helping him grow into a strong, well-rounded young adult."

They also noticed a new sense of calm and purpose. For Samuel, the trail became a place of focus. On days when school was tough or stress ran high, riding offered relief. The health benefits went far beyond the physical.

A Different Kind of Impact: Behind the Camera

Though Samuel didn't compete in the Race Series, he rarely missed a race weekend. While his teammates hit the course, Samuel grabbed his camera. Over the years, he became the team photographer—capturing the grit, joy, and determination of his peers in motion.



"I love to see the sheer determination of my teammates crossing the finish line," Samuel states. "Whether they were battling for a podium or just finishing a long race, it's always amazing to capture a snapshot of how they feel at that moment."



What started as a side interest became a service to his team. He captured finish line triumphs, race day camaraderie, and post ride celebrations. His images told a story that words often couldn't: that every rider's effort matters.

Samuel's photography became more than a hobby. His work helped define the visual identity of Team Cartecay and told the story of the team's culture—a culture of effort, inclusion, and support. When new riders joined, they often found themselves featured in Samuel's next batch of photos—a quiet but powerful way of saying, "You belong here."

His coach, Larry Alonso, calls him a "budding renaissance man." "Samuel's contributions to the team are recorded excellently, and for posterity, through the lens and artistry of his camera work," says Larry. "He's the first photo chronicler of Team Cartecay, effectively capturing the history of the team from nearly the beginning."





“

"Samuel has gained a deep appreciation for the biking community and learned the value of giving back, whether through trail work or supporting others. Georgia Cycling has shown him — and us — just how many positive experiences bikes can bring into life, far beyond competition."

- **Dondi & Jennifer Fontenot**
Samuel's Parents

Leading Through Service

Beyond photography, Samuel brought leadership, mechanical expertise, and mentorship to the team. With a background in bike mechanics, he frequently assisted teammates in troubleshooting their gear and teaching them simple fixes.

"Teaching people to fix their own bikes makes the sport more accessible," Samuel says. "It's expensive sometimes, and if I can help someone save a trip to the shop, they might be able to ride more."

This peer-to-peer leadership strengthened the team. Samuel

led by example, not just in technical know-how, but in generosity. He used his talents to lift others up, and his teammates knew they could count on him.

A Family Affair

Samuel's journey with Georgia Cycling was not a solo ride. His parents were deeply involved as volunteer coaches, making their time with the program a shared family experience.

"Some of our favorite moments were the car rides to and from events," the Fontenots said. "Chatting about the trails, the race day highs (and occasional lows), and just soaking in the experience

as a family."

They believe the program gave their son more than strong legs and better endurance. It gave him confidence, a sense of connection, and purpose. And it gave their family years of meaningful time together.

Georgia Cycling is filled with stories like the Fontenots'—stories where coaching becomes parenting, riding becomes healing, and trails become classrooms.

Redefining What It Means to Participate

Georgia Cycling believes that every student deserves the opportunity to ride, to grow stronger, feel supported, and discover their capabilities. Racing is an exciting and important part of the program for many athletes. But Samuel's story reminds us that you don't have to race to belong, and you don't have to compete to grow.

The value of the TeamMTB experience isn't measured in medals—it's measured in personal growth, meaningful connection, and the belief that everyone has something to contribute.

"If you're considering joining your local Georgia Cycling team, you should!" Samuel says. "Whether you want to race or just want to adventure ride, you will meet so many amazing people and have a great time."



SCAN ME!



“

"It's about the riding, not the racing. I've seen so much growth in myself within the past year and a half. This program has really taught me how to set goals and hit those goals. School work feels easier. Life feels easier. I feel calmer, more relaxed. It is a connecting with nature thing."

- Griffith Watson
North Cobb High School

ride. thrive. repeat.

Movement on the trail leads to strength off the bike.

POSITIVE IMPACT

Athletes report remarkable improvements from the preseason to the postseason:



10%

10% increase in the ability to get restful nighttime sleep.



8%

8% increase in feeling connected and supported by others.

At Georgia Cycling, we've seen it again and again: the simple act of getting on a bike can lead to powerful, lasting change. Whether it's a young rider building confidence, a coach rediscovering fitness, or a family adopting a more active lifestyle, mountain biking creates a ripple effect of health and wellbeing.

A Gateway to Personal Growth

For many kids, our programs are more than just a sport—they are a gateway to personal growth and athletic development. In fact, 54% of TeamMTB participants state that mountain biking is their only sport.

That makes our teams a vital access point for physical activity, personal development, and the kind of confidence that comes from showing up and pushing yourself week after week.

The Family Effect

The benefits don't stop with the riders. Our impact often reaches the whole household. In fact:

- **70% of families ride bikes together** either often or occasionally.
- **47% of parents say another family member started riding** because of their child's involvement in Georgia Cycling.

Community That Goes Beyond the Bike

With over 100 local teams across Georgia, we're more than just a collection of riders—we're a statewide community. This large and vibrant community is dedicated to improving the health and wellbeing of young people across Georgia.

Often, athletes find a profound sense of belonging within our community. Many Georgia Cycling participants share that they have tried other sports but never felt truly at home until they discovered mountain biking. Here, they find their place, their passion, and their people.

Stronger Minds, Healthier Habits

Mountain biking isn't just great for fitness. It supports mental and emotional wellbeing in meaningful, measurable ways.

The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention identified¹ eight health benefits of physical activity for children:

- Academic Performance
- Muscular Fitness
- Cardiometabolic Health
- Brain Health
- Heart & Lung Health
- Long-term Health
- Bone Strength
- Healthy Weight

TeamMTB athletes report remarkable improvements from the preseason to the postseason (see sidebar below).

These are more than just percentages—they're proof of transformation. Behind each number is a story: a rider learning to trust their body, a teammate finding a support system, a student building healthy routines.

One Ride at a Time

This is what Georgia Cycling is all about: not just racing or recreation, but real, life-shaping growth.

Through our programs, we're not just building better athletes; we're building a stronger Georgia. The relief of a good night's sleep, or the quiet confidence of a child who feels seen and supported—we're building a healthier Georgia, one ride at a time.



SCAN ME!



3%

3% increase in success in their schoolwork.



7%

7% increase in confidence to manage stress and anxiety.



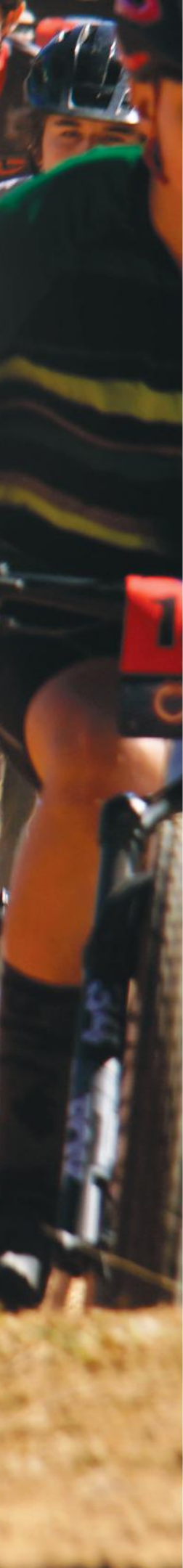
11%

11% increase in feeling healthy and strong overall.



TALON'S RIDE

He rides for fun.
He rides for health.
He rides with CF.



"I'M TALON PULLEN,
I LOVE TO MOUNTAIN
BIKE, AND I HAVE CF."

To watch Talon Pullen tear down a trail—leaning into berms, dust in his wake, laughter in the air—you'd never know the battle going on inside his lungs. You'd just see a teenager doing what he loves: riding bikes with his friends, goofing off with his team, and living for the next trail session. But behind the clay-covered kit and confident smile, there's a story of grit, gratitude, and a fight to breathe.

Talon has Cystic Fibrosis (CF), a chronic genetic disease that affects the lungs and digestive system. The condition causes thick mucus to build up in the lungs, leading to infections, inflammation, and daily treatment routines that most teens can't imagine. "Each treatment takes about 45 minutes, and I do three or four a day," he says. "Mountain biking helps shake my lungs like my vest does—and that helps me stay healthier."



It's more than fun. Riding his mountain bike through Georgia trails has helped Talon reduce his hospital stays, improve lung function, and gain weight—all of which are major health wins for someone living with CF. "Basically, I get healthier when I ride," he says. "My body works better. I'm hungrier, which is a big deal with my disease. Basically, I gain weight and lung function during

the MTB season—so my overall health is way better."

For a kid with a chronic illness, that's life-changing. But Talon doesn't frame it as limitation—he frames it as motivation. Mountain biking is hard. It's real. And for Talon, it's working.

Pedal Power: Mind and Body in Sync

For Talon, the benefits of mountain biking go far beyond fitness. The sport has become a quasi type of therapy—both physically and mentally.

Living with CF means constant medications, hours of treatment, and managing a body that doesn't always cooperate. Some of Talon's medications cause some mental health side effects, and that's where biking plays a powerful role. "Riding always calms me down and makes me feel better," he says. "It makes me feel in control of my body by doing hard things."

On the hard days, when he's feeling off or overwhelmed, the solution is simple: ride. "Sometimes my parents make me go for a ride

when I seem down and grumpy," he laughs. "And I'm always so grateful about two minutes into it. I love how I feel mentally after riding."

Physically, mountain biking is equally transformative. "The level of athleticism mountain biking requires makes me push my body harder than any sport I've tried... in a good way," he says. "I played soccer my whole life, and I still love it—but it didn't push me like riding does, either physically or mentally."

Balancing CF treatments with the life of a teenager can be a challenge. But Talon says, "Something super helpful is that I can use a bike ride or practice in place of treatment time! My maintenance treatments are meds and a vest that shakes my body to break up mucus. Each treatment takes about 45 minutes and I do 3-4 a day. MTB shakes up my lungs really good and helps me break up mucus, so replacing a vest treatment with a ride is awesome."

Finding Belonging on the Bike

Mountain biking hasn't just improved Talon's physical





health—it's transformed his social life too. Like many young kids, Talon struggled to find a sense of belonging. "I had trouble finding friends before mountain biking," he admits. "This sport changed that. I love riding with people, making friends, and getting to know more people. I feel like this is something anyone can enjoy with anyone."

That sense of community is one of the things that keeps Talon coming back year after year.

Georgia Cycling gave Talon a team, a routine, and a space to grow—but his biking family extends beyond his Red Clay Composite team. He often rides with his friend Silas Verdery from the Augusta team, and his rides with family are legendary. "I started by riding with my whole family, which I love," Talon says. "Even my Grammy—she's almost 70 and still loves to ride."

Talon's younger sister, Tinsley, has joined the fun. While they have ridden bikes for years as family, they now ride as teammates. 2024 was Tinsley's first year as a Red Clay Composite student-athlete.

A Voice Beyond the Trail

Talon's strength on the bike has translated into leadership off the trail. He regularly speaks to first-year medical residents at Augusta Children's Hospital to help them better understand what life with CF is really like.

"I tell them how important it is to treat patients like kids first and patients second," he says. "I have had so many docs walk through the door during admissions who just make me feel awful. Like a chart and a checklist versus a sick kid having a hard few weeks."

These talks aren't just informative—they are transformative. "Something cool that happens is I usually get to see some of the med students as they come through the teaching hospital. I have been told many times that it was so helpful to hear from a real person experiencing CF versus just a textbook," Talon says. And making time to do this is important to him, too. "I get to have a voice, which is fun. I hope I'm making a difference for them as future doctors."

He's also open about the faith that fuels him. "I don't know how

anyone can live out any disease with this amount of suffering without God," Talon says. "He gets me through one step at a time."

A Perfect Fit

Talon's story is more than a profile in courage—it's a living example of Georgia Cycling's mission: to help kids grow stronger through mountain biking. Whether he's on the trail with his family or pedaling through the woods with his team, Talon is discovering his potential, helping his lungs and nourishing his soul in a sport that's become so much more than exercise.

"I think I've found my place," he says. *"This is where I belong."*



SCAN ME!



GirlsRide MTB

CHAMPIONING TO INCREASE FEMALE PARTICIPATION IN MOUNTAIN BIKING

Our "Girls Ride" initiative breaks down barriers to build confidence and increase the number of female athletes and coaches involved in Georgia Cycling programs.

Research and personal stories tell us the same thing: when girls have access to sports, they gain confidence, perform better academically, and develop lifelong habits of health and wellness. But for many girls, traditional sports don't always feel like the right fit. That's where mountain biking comes in.

"Too many young women don't have a sport to participate in, or they play a sport where they're stuck on the bench," says Laura Lea Alonso, Manager of Georgia Cycling's Girls Ride initiative. "Mountain biking gives them a place where they are active, challenged, and fully engaged—whether they want to race or just enjoy the trails."

The Power of Representation
GirlsRide isn't just about increasing

the number of female athletes—it's about creating a culture of support and belonging. One of the biggest factors in getting more girls on bikes is ensuring they see female role models leading the way.

"Seeing other female athletes and coaches makes all the difference," explains Lucy Nell Alonso, an eighth grader with Gilmer Cartecay Composite. "I grew up watching my older brother race, and I

couldn't wait for my turn. Now, I get to be a mentor for younger girls through programs like Pedal Palooza and Trail Rangers."

This is why the Girls Ride Champions—a group of dedicated female student-athletes and coaches—are the backbone of the initiative. These 34 volunteer leaders actively promote the sport within their teams and communities, ensuring that more girls see mountain biking as a



Sophi Sutton

What changes did you notice in yourself over the course of seven years of mountain biking—physically, emotionally, or socially?

If I were ever having a hard day, I found I could go to practice and ride for hours to get it all out. I learned how to control my emotions and not take them out on others, but instead get everything out on a bike ride. And physically, mountain biking just made me so much stronger and fit.

I learned to work hard. Never compare yourself to others because someone is always going to be better than you. I work to be the best version of myself by trying to beat my previous best, whether that's on the bike, at school, or any environment.



sport where they belong.

"The Girls Ride program brings a sisterhood to mountain biking," says Sophi Sutton, a longtime Georgia Cycling athlete. "By the end of the season, you don't just have teammates—you have sisters."

A Different Kind of Sport

Girls who join Georgia Cycling don't have to worry about making the team or getting playing time.

There are no benches in mountain biking. Every girl rides, learns, and grows at her own pace—whether she's a competitive racer or an adventure rider.

Laura Lea Alonso has seen firsthand how transformative the experience can be.

"I have watched girls go from being afraid to attend practice to charging through the ranks in competition—and that confidence

spills over into academics and life," she says. "I've seen moms start as reluctant participants, then become coaches, racers, and even pursue new careers. Mountain biking can be a catalyst for change."

The Girls Ride Student Advisory Board provides another key pathway for female athletes to shape the future of the sport. These young leaders offer direct feedback on race weekends,



Lucy Nell Alonso

What's something you've learned from riding that's helped you off the bike?

On the bike, I can do the hard things, so off the bike *I know* I can do the hard things at school or work.

Have you noticed a change in yourself since joining the team?

I have definitely seen changes in my physical, emotional, and social aspects. I feel stronger and more fit. Being part of the team has made me feel happier, lighter, and has helped me avoid depressing thoughts. I have more confidence in talking to people and feeling more connected by making friends around the state. Unlike many other sports, in mountain biking you can be connected to your team and other teams!

coaching strategies, and new program ideas—helping to create a more inclusive and welcoming environment for future riders.

Coaching the Next Generation

Encouraging more girls to ride starts with ensuring they have female coaches to look up to. Girls Ride has prioritized increasing the number of female-certified coaches, and in 2024, the program launched its first women-only MBC 101 training course.

"Some women may not feel ready to coach just yet, but MBC 101 builds their confidence to ride more and shows them that they belong here," explains Laura Lea Alonso.

More female coaches means more opportunities for young girls to see themselves in the sport—ensuring that Georgia Cycling continues to grow toward its goal of 30% female participation.

A Movement, Not Just a Moment

In just one season, Georgia Cycling's female athletes and coaches pedaled an estimated 148,563 miles—a testament to the growing impact of Girls Ride.

"If you're thinking about trying mountain biking, just go for it," says Sophi Sutton. "You don't have to be fast. You don't have to be experienced. You just have to start. You never know—you might fall in love with it."

With continued investment, leadership, and passion, Girls Ride will ensure that more girls and women find their place in mountain biking—and in doing so, build confidence, community, and strength that lasts a lifetime.



34

Girls Ride Champions: a volunteer force of women who participate in outreach events that help promote female participation in the sport.



20

Student Advisory Board Members: a group of female student-athletes providing direct feedback to improve race experiences, coaching, and programming.



4

Girls Ride Events:

In 2024, we hosted three pre-season events designed to build awareness and one end of season celebration at our annual MTB Fest.



1

Digital Toolkit: This year we launched an online Girls Ride resources section for coaches. The aim is to help coaches recruit and retain female riders and coaches.



Georgia Cycling hosts outreach events across the state, meeting potential riders and coaches in their communities.



SCAN ME!

It Takes a Village

Every Georgia Cycling race weekend is a showcase—not just of student-athlete talent, but of the incredible community working behind the scenes to make it all happen. From parking the first car to the breakdown of the infield, each event is powered by a dedicated crew of staff and volunteers who bring passion, expertise, and purpose to every role.

Roughly 40 core event staff members contribute to each race weekend, many of whom commit to year-round planning calls. These volunteers bring decades of combined experience and play a vital role in shaping our race operations—from course setup and parking logistics to merchandise, music, timing, and emergency response. Their impact ensures that although our riders are amateurs, our race experience feels anything but.

Race weekend also welcomes dozens of event-day volunteers who step into key roles like crossing guards, course sweepers, and more. Together, this extended team helps create an event that is safe, welcoming, and unforgettable for athletes, coaches, and families.

We are proud to have such dedicated people as part of our team not just for what they do, but for how they do it: with heart, hustle, and a shared desire to help kids.



Mark Still	Announcer
Susan Still	Announcer Assistant
Brody Griffin	Audio Assistant
Dusty Montgomery	Audio Manager
Chris Wade	Chief Course Marshal
Dave Ablashi	Chief Course Marshal
Derek Boyd	Chief Course Marshal
Joe Lee	Chief Course Marshal
Erik Kocanda	Communications Manager
Kent McMullen	Course Setting Assistant
Eric Meinecke	Course Setting Manager
James Himstedt	Exit Gate Manager
Derrick Hogan	Feed Zone Manager
Derek Watson	General Store Manager
Daniel Johnson	Hospitality Manager
Scott Crocker	Medical Advisor
Devonny Leger	Medical Assistant
Molly Hayes	Medical Assistant
Bobby Martin	Neutral Support Lead
Manuel Ochoa	Operations Assistant
Natalia Botero Agudelo	Operations Assistant
Shane Oestricher	Operations Manager
Darwin Perez	Parking Attendant
Joe Girvan	Parking Attendant
Kamron Wilson	Parking Attendant
Ginger Peacock	Parking Lead Assistant
Maria Ochoa	Parking Lead Attendant
Brendon Veal	Parking Manager
Darius Farrokhi	Photographer
Steve Herlocher	Pit Zone Manager
Tammy McMullen	Raffle Manager
Rodney Henderson	Scoring Assistant
Joel Peacock	Security
Ashlie Hogan	Skills Area Manager
Michel van Musschenbroek	Staging Assistant
Helen van Musschenbroek	Timing Assistant
Griffin Calloway	UTV Operator
Ellie Hayes	Headquarters Assistant

Ops Team Arrives. By moonlight, the Ops Team deploys infrastructure and distributes Honda generators that power essentials like the timing tent and General Store. Meanwhile, the course setting crew departs to inspect the trail, mark hazards, and ensure the route is ready for racing.

04:51 AM



05:45 AM

Staff Meeting. Before sunrise, our staff huddles for quick updates across 20 departments—covering things like safety, weather, course conditions, and the day's schedule. After syncing up, the crew shares a team breakfast, then fans out to their posts, ready to bring the venue to life.

Parking & Pit Zone Open. Cars are already lined up as the gates open. The parking crew guides families into place with smooth efficiency. In the Pit Zone, trailers roll in, tents pop up, and teams unload gear. The venue shifts from sleepy to electric as race day officially kicks off.

06:30 AM



07:30 AM

Coaches Meeting. One coach from each team gathers at Race HQ for a morning briefing. Georgia Cycling staff shares course updates, schedule reminders, and key race day details to keep everyone informed and connected.



Staging Racers. To help reduce accidents, riders are staged with the fastest racers at the front of the pack. As they walk to the chute, Michel van Musschenbroek greets each one with a personal boost. Meanwhile, the DJ spins music to pump energy into the crowd.

08:23 AM



10:10 AM

Monitoring the Finish. Accurate results matter—so we triple-check every finish. Each rider has a bike plate with a number and a chip. A computer logs their chip, a camera is recording, and a person manually keys in plate numbers as riders finish. Redundant? Definitely. Reliable? Absolutely.

Sky Watch. Retired NWS meteorologist Kent McMullen monitors the radar. While prepping the noon update, Kent is watching a line of rain moving our way. Light rain looks possible, but luckily it fizzles out. His accurate reports help us keep athletes and spectators safe.

11:58 AM



01:18 PM

On Call, On Course. Two minutes before our largest wave—JV2 Boys—hits the course, our trained EMTs are already in position. Stationed throughout the venue all day and equipped with Honda Powersports UTVs, the medical team is ready to respond if needed.

Medal Ceremony. The races are over, but the crowd sticks around. Families and teams stay to celebrate ALL riders on the podium, not just those they know. Because here, sportsmanship isn't just a value; it's a way of life that runs as deep as the competition.

03:42 PM



04:04 PM

Tear Down. What took days to build comes down in a matter of hours. With help from community volunteers, the Ops Team dismantles the infield, start and finish lines, tents, and more—packing it all up and loading the trailers for the next event.

PEDAL PALOOZA

GEORGIA CYCLING



IN 2024, GEORGIA CYCLING'S PEDAL PALOOZA MADE A DOZEN STOPS, BRINGING FREE EVENTS TO COMMUNITIES ACROSS GEORGIA.

BLAZING A NEW TRAIL: THE LAUNCH OF THE TRAIL RANGERS

In March 2024, Georgia Cycling unveiled something big—something built just for the youngest riders in our community. With a live statewide webcast that drew hundreds of excited viewers, we officially launched Trail Rangers, our new mountain biking program for elementary-aged kids in grades 3–5. It was a moment years in the making, and one that signaled a bold step forward in our mission to make cycling more accessible, more inclusive, and more fun for kids of all ages.

But we didn't stop with the announcement. We hit the road.

To bring the excitement directly to Georgia communities, we launched Pedal Palooza—a traveling tour that introduced elementary-aged kids to mountain biking in hands-on, playful ways. Across the state, kids climbed onto bikes, zipped across fields, and played their way into a love of riding. For many, it was their very first experience on a mountain bike. And for their families, it was an introduction to Georgia Cycling as a youth development organization committed to strengthening the health and lives of Georgia's children.

A Program Built to Play and Connect

The Trail Rangers is rooted in two simple but powerful ideas: Play and Connect. Every Trail Rangers session will be designed to help kids build confidence, develop skills, and connect with their

teammates, with their coaches, and with the outdoors. Games, movement, and teamwork will be the foundation of each session.

By designing a program tailored to the developmental needs of younger riders, Trail Rangers meets kids where they are—and helps them discover who they're becoming.

Challenge by Choice

The Trail Rangers will implement a philosophy of *Challenge by Choice*, which will enable participants to chart their own course.

This approach will allow individual Rangers to:

- **Set Their Own Goals:** Choose how and when to push boundaries
- **Feel Supported:** Thrive in an encouraging environment that fosters confidence and resilience
- **Be Respected:** Decide their level of participation without pressure

By giving kids the power to decide how they engage, we hope to create a space for self-discovery and celebrate every victory—big or small.

Field Testing for a Stronger Launch

Throughout 2024, Georgia Cycling partnered with select local teams to pilot Trail Rangers activities. These pilot sites helped us field test curriculum, evaluate engagement, and make real-time adjustments. From game mechanics to session pacing, every element was refined based on the lived experiences of

coaches and kids in the field. That feedback loop was essential—and it's helped ensure the 2025 launch is as impactful and inclusive as possible.

More Than a Program—A Statewide Invitation

Trail Rangers is more than just an entry point to cycling. It's an invitation to joyful movement, to healthy habits, and to early memories of riding bikes with friends and feeling proud of trying something new. It's a program that lets kids be kids—and builds the foundation for future adventure, whether that leads to our TeamMTB program or simply a lifelong love of riding.

By the end of the year, hundreds of families across Georgia had been introduced to Trail Rangers—and to a new way of thinking about what youth sports can be.

As we look ahead, we know the path we're building is only just beginning. But thanks to the energy and enthusiasm of 2024, the Trail Rangers are already rolling strong.

The Trail Rangers program is made possible by grants from two Georgia-focused foundations:

CHESTNUT
FAMILY FOUNDATION

Arthur M. Blank
Family Foundation



Fiscal Health

2024 Income Statement

REVENUE

Programs	\$488,224	(39%)
Grants	\$405,000	(32%)
Donations & Sponsorships	\$250,016	(20%)
In-Kind Donations	\$64,244	(5%)
Merchandise & Other	\$55,042	(4%)
Total Revenue	\$1,262,525	(100%)

EXPENSES

Program Services	\$913,015	(75%)
General and Administrative Expenses (G&A)	\$301,280	(25%)
Total Expenses	\$1,214,294	(100%)

CHANGE IN NET ASSETS

\$48,231

2024 Balance Sheet

ASSETS

Cash & Investments	\$518,927
Prepaid Taxes	\$600
Property & Equipment	\$53,815
Total Assets	\$573,341

LIABILITIES

Current Liabilities	\$2,551
Notes Payable	\$0
Total Liabilities	\$2,551

NET ASSETS

Without Donor Restrictions	\$178,538
With Donor Restrictions	\$392,253
Total Net Assets	\$570,790

TOTAL LIABILITIES AND NET ASSETS \$573,341



Thanks to our Donors

As a 501(c)3 nonprofit, we rely on community support to fuel our programs. These generous donors enable us to make a difference in the lives of Georgia's youth.

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- Jamie Youngblood

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GREAT KNOWING YOU'VE
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