



**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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### **3,000 Miles of 15-Minute Sprints to End Child Trafficking**

**SANTA CLARITA, CA** – There’s a detective who works with Homeland Security, a 6<sup>th</sup> grade teacher, a bank president, two business owners, a research scientist, a project manager, and a land survey vice president.

What’s the connection? They want to set children free from human trafficking.

Beginning on June 17, eight cyclists and their crew will set out on a non-stop, transcontinental relay race from Oceanside, California, to Annapolis, Maryland, in the 2023 Race Across America (RAAM).

It’s a grueling, muscle-numbing, sleep-depriving, and stunningly beautiful ride, covered in alternating 15-minute calf-searing sprints by each rider.

The freedom of child trafficking victims is their fuel.

Founded in 2002, ZOE International has a mission to reach every person with God’s love and rescue every child from human trafficking through prevention, rescue, and restoration programs in five countries—the United States, Thailand, Mexico, Japan, and Australia.

Brad Orteni, a former undercover online child exploitation investigator with the Ephrata (Pennsylvania) Police Department, is ZOE team’s race director. He also serves as the Eastern USA Regional Director for ZOE.

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***“We visited Thailand and expected to see shattered, broken kids, but instead, we saw children overflowing with joy.”***

- Brad Orteni

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Orteni and his wife, Lori, were introduced to ZOE’s work firsthand in 2014.

“We visited Thailand and expected to see shattered, broken kids, but instead, we saw children overflowing with joy,” he explained. “They were healthy and healing, exceeding our expectations. Lori and I were stunned.

“When we saw what was happening, it was a mystery I needed to solve. I wanted to get to the bottom of this. What in the world was going on here?”



ZOE competed in the RAAM in 2019, claimed third place, and raised more than \$175,000 to fight child trafficking. They took first place in 2021 and received donations totaling more than \$380,000 for ZOE International. This year, the team's goal is \$750,000.

Their journey will take them from the Pacific Ocean to iconic Monument Valley in Utah, up the Rocky Mountains, through the windblown plains of Kansas, over the mighty Mississippi, past the cornfields and soybean fields of the Midwest, and over the Appalachian Mountains to the Chesapeake Bay. It's the classic American road trip on a continuous loop for six days. Except on bicycles. Using a never-ending supply of muscle ointment. And with a profound life-saving purpose.

### Heartbreaking Stats

The growing problem of child sex trafficking globally and in the United States is an issue that is close to the team's heart. Here's why:

- 49.6 million people are victims of modern slavery worldwide, according to the International Labor Organization ([ILO, 2022](#))
- 4.9 million of that number are women and girls, who are sex trafficked ([ILO, 2022](#)).
- 72% of trafficking victims are women and girls while 28% are men and boys ([Global Report on Trafficking in Persons, 2018](#))
- 50,123 reported cases of human trafficking in the U.S. ([National Human Trafficking Hotline, 2021](#))
- 403,000 victims of human trafficking in the U.S. in 2016 ([ILO, 2017](#)).
- 25,000+ children were reported missing to the; 1 in 6 were likely victims of sex trafficking ([National Center for Missing and Exploited Children, 2022](#))

The idea of competing in the race began for Ortenzi in 2014 during that life-changing trip to Thailand.

"The children's fight inspired me," Ortenzi said. "Every one of them was a fighter—fighting to get their life back. Their fight inspired me and changed my life. Competing in Race Across America allows ZOE to take this fight against child sex trafficking across the United States."

"I wasn't aware of human trafficking happening in the states," noted crew chief and former cyclist, Allen Fisher. "ZOE is bringing freedom to many children, and I want to stand with them. If we pull one child out of sex trafficking, it's worth it."

### Meet the Team

The eight-man cycling team includes:

- Kevin Quinter, 52, police detective working with Homeland Security to fight human trafficking, Wyomissing, Pennsylvania
- Nate Eakin, 40, 6<sup>th</sup> grade teacher, Lititz, Pennsylvania
- Matt Lapp, 41, CEO at JM Lapp Plumbing and Heating, New Holland, Pennsylvania
- Tom Jordan, 56, bank president, Lititz, Pennsylvania



- John Glick, 45, owner, construction company, Narvon, Pennsylvania
  - Merv Beiler, 46, project manager at Father's Pallet Company and owner of Latte Love drive-thru coffee shop, Strasburg, Pennsylvania
  - Craig Whiteford, 55, healthcare research and development scientist, York, Pennsylvania
  - Jeff Conaway, 43, vice president of operations at Encompass Services, Denver, Colorado
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***There will be a special Meet the Team Zoom conference call on Tuesday, May 30, at 10 a.m. Email Clem Boyd at [clem@infinityconcepts.com](mailto:clem@infinityconcepts.com) or call or text him at 724.930.4003 to receive the link.***

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Many team members began training as early as the fall 2022, putting in hundreds of hours on stationary bikes, outdoor rides, and strength training.

Not only do the cyclists compete in the race, but they also raise \$20,000 each for ZOE International to rescue more children and begin the restoration journey with those entrusted to ZOE's care.

Title sponsor for the ZOE RAAM team is CountryLane Gazebos from New Holland, Pennsylvania.

Other corporate sponsors include Bomberger's, Breeo, Duco Accounting, Eagle Rental Center, Hajoca Lancaster, Rheem, JM Lapp, Lancaster Bicycle Shop, Lanco Sheds LLC, Redner's Market, Sensenig's Feed Mill, Strasburg Pallet, King Farms, Gibbel Insurance, Univest Financial, Bevanda, Urban Southern, Firm Foundations LLC, LNP Media, and Weaver Construction.

For more information about ZOE International, visit [gozoe.org](http://gozoe.org) or [zoeraam.com](http://zoeraam.com) and the 2023 Race Across America at [raceacrossamerica.org](http://raceacrossamerica.org).

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To schedule an interview with Brad Ortenzi, ZOE RAAM Team Director, email Clem Boyd, Director of Public Relations, at [clem@infinityconcepts.com](mailto:clem@infinityconcepts.com) or call or text him at 724.930.4003.

Follow the team and schedule daily check-ins during the race. Email, call, or text Clem Boyd.

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**Caption:** The ZOE RAAM Race Team 2023: (L-R) John Glick, Tom Jordan, Kevin Quinter, Merv Beiler, Nate Eakin, Craig Whiteford, Matt Lapp. Not pictured: Jeff Conaway. To learn more about the team, go to [ZOERAAM.org/media](http://ZOERAAM.org/media).