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## Schools benefit ride to begin in Orange

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Orange has been selected as the starting point of a 15-day bicycle ride to raise funds for Rise Schools, which serve children with and without special needs.

The original Rise School is at the University of Alabama in Tuscaloosa. There are six other Rise Schools – Austin, Corpus Christi, Dallas, Houston, Denver and Stillwater, Okla. About 50 percent of Rise students have special needs.

The goal for the race, called the Rise Across Texas Challenge – added to future donations – is \$5 million. Raised so far has been about 25 percent of that, or a little more than \$1.2 million.

The race will span 13 Texas counties and more than 800 miles. The first leg begins March 6 with a ribbon-cutting at Ochiltree-Inman Park in Orange and ends in Kountze. Tentative time is 9 a.m. The final destination is Presidio, spanning Southeast Texas bayous, Hill Country slopes and desert straightaways.

Orange Economic Development Director Jay Trahan said organizers scouted several jumping off locations before deciding on Orange.

“They knew the first day would end at Kountze and looked for something in proximity to the state line,” he said. “They wanted something close to Interstate 10, even though the race would not be on the interstate. They also liked that the Sabine River is here, and for some of the race they will follow the Sabine.”

Rise Across Texas Executive Director Marilyn Carter told The Record the challenge ride was created by well known Austin philanthropist Steve Hicks. Rise School of Austin board trustee and Longhorn Coach Mack Brown is also using his notoriety to get the word out.

“He (Hicks) noticed work crews were disassembling classroom on the weekends, so the areas could be used for churches,” Carter said. “And he asked ‘Why are they doing that?’” It was then, she said, Hicks conceived of the idea for the race to help raise funds for permanent Rise buildings in Austin.

Some 50 or more Rise Across Texas riders are expected present on opening day. Riders from Orange and surrounding areas may sign-up for the first day’s ride to Kountze, Carter said.

Trek Travel is handling transportation for those journeying to Orange, who plan to eat at Shangri La Botanical Gardens on their first night in the city, she said.

Rise Schools are not-for-profit, serving children ages 6 months to 6 years, designed to provide a blend of intervention, therapy and family-centered services, according to the Rise mission statement.

Other goals are to prepare children for their next learning environment and start students on the path to reaching their full potential.

Each Rise classroom has a lead teacher required to have a master’s degree in early childhood special education or a related field. In addition to the lead teacher, each classroom has a minimum of two teaching assistants.

For more information, to sign-up as a rider or to donate to the Rise Across Texas Challenge, go to [www.riseacrosstexas.org](http://www.riseacrosstexas.org) or call 1-877-672-2010.

For more information on Rise Schools, go to [www.riseschool.org](http://www.riseschool.org).



From left, Rise Across Texas Challenge founder and Austin philanthropist Steve Hicks, his wife Donna Stockton-Hicks, and Rise School of Austin trustees Sally Brown and University of Texas Coach Mack Brown at the challenge kick-off party Jan. 29.

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