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## Youthful Cyclist Gearing up for the 19th Annual Tour de Elizabeth

**Elizabeth, N.J.** - Growing up in an urban area meant not going too far for basic needs, and 15 year old Kayly Hernandez was no exception. Her mother, a lifelong Elizabeth resident, never learned to ride a bike, so neither did she. Fortunately, that changed when she began working with Groundwork Elizabeth, a community driven organization formed to ‘change places, change lives’. One of the benefits of joining Groundwork Elizabeth’s Youth Green Team, was the opportunity to visit National Parks and bring home all those experiences.

In 2018, she was asked to join eight other local youth on a trip to the Grand Canyon. One of the highlights of that trip included a bicycle ride along the canyon rim. Luckily, two of her Groundwork Youth Leaders helped her learn and she was ready for the trip. “I didn’t fully realize what I was getting into,” Kayly says of the whole experience, which turned into a 21 mile ride. “Lots of other youth gave up, but I knew I was representing my hometown Elizabeth, so I was motivated to finish.” Not only did she make the 21 mile bike ride along the Canyon Rim, but returned home and made another life changing ride. She signed up and participated in the Annual Tour de Elizabeth, a 15 mile bicycle ride around Elizabeth.

Kayly will be joining hundreds others on May 22<sup>nd</sup> in the 19<sup>th</sup> Tour de Elizabeth, a recreational bicycle ride organized by Groundwork, with support from the Mayor and City of Elizabeth, Union County’s HEART Program, Elizabethtown Gas, and many other sponsors and supporters. “I haven’t ridden lately, but if I could ride the Grand Canyon, I know I can certainly ride in the Tour de Elizabeth. I’m in!,” says Kayly, who is now 19 and a licensed driver.

The family friendly ride starts and finishes at City Hall, 50 Winfield Scott Plaza, with registration beginning at 7:00 a.m. on May 22<sup>nd</sup>. This year’s theme is “*Superheroes for a Super City*” and riders are invited to wear costumes representing their favorite superhero. We hope to see many costumes at the start line at 9:00 a.m.

### Signing Up and Supporting

The ride is managed by Groundwork Elizabeth and a Bicycle Committee made up of City, County, Schools, and private organizations. Registration is open at [www.groundworkelizabeth.org](http://www.groundworkelizabeth.org), [www.elizabethnj.org](http://www.elizabethnj.org), and at [www.Goelizabethnj.com/bike](http://www.Goelizabethnj.com/bike). Each rider is entered into a free raffle. There is a limited amount of signature Tour de Elizabeth shirts which will be given to the first 500 who register. The Union County Board of County Commissioners is donating string backpacks and grocery bags. Those wanting to rent a bicycle for the event can log onto <https://www.unlimitedbiking.com/events/tour-de-elizabeth-bike-rentals/>

Supported since 2004 by Mayor J. Christian Bollwage and Departments within the City of Elizabeth, the Tour is also underwritten by the Union County Board of County Commissioners HEART grant, local community nonprofits and stakeholders, with special support by Elizabethtown Gas Company, local businesses and nonprofits. Sponsors include: Elberon Development Group, Quattro Realty, the Elizabeth Destination Marketing Organization, Brounell and Kramer, Vinty, Trinitas RWJBH, Palin Enterprises, Atalanta Corporation, Angel Rodriguez State Farm, Josh Blane Atty., the Rotary Club of Elizabeth, Harbor Consultants, the Elizabeth

Avenue Partnership, NJ American Water, Infineum USA. LP, Linda Ershow-Levenberg & David Levenberg, the Gateway Family YMCA, Columbia Bank, the Tropicana Diner, BJ&M Auto, and Assemblywoman for the 20<sup>th</sup> NJ District, Annette Quijano Additional support comes from Too Many Stars Tshirts, the Elizabeth Development Company, Gargiulo Fruit and the Greater Elizabeth Chamber of Commerce. Some proceeds go to Groundwork Elizabeth's work in urban agriculture, youth programming, and a Climate Safe Initiative. For more information call Jonathan Phillips at 908-289-0262 ext. 203.