

## Trekking the nation for hope Postal carrier wants letters of hope to go in orbit

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Gary Fitch of St. Paul, Minn., shown riding Wednesday as he stopped in Ellensburg on day two of his trek across the United States to urge people to write him letters of hope. *Photo by Mike Johnston/Daily Record*



ELLENSBURG — Gary Fitch and his wife, Joan, left Ellensburg at 7:15 this morning and headed east on Vantage Highway to continue Gary's bicycling quest across the nation to prompt the writing of letters of hope that, ultimately, will go into orbit around the Earth.

Fitch, 55, a U.S. Postal Service letter carrier from St. Paul, Minn., today has the more modest goal to get to Moses Lake for a night's stay after stopping in small communities along the way to get his message out: he wants letters expressing any kind of hope mailed to his post office box in St. Paul.

"It can be a kid in grade school talking about his hope for a new bicycle or his parents to get back together again," Fitch said Wednesday during a stop at the Daily Record. "It can be someone explaining how the world can be made a better place to live. I want to show the unity of mankind with the hope that is in their heart, with something that's positive. Hope has so many expressions."

Joan drives the couple's RV about 10 miles ahead of him at a stretch and, thus, will follow his trek across the nation. Fitch said he plans to stop wherever there is a post office. He began his trip 10 a.m. Tuesday from the Queen Anne Post Office in Seattle.

"It's something universal to man, to all of us, that we have hope in a better tomorrow," Fitch said. "It's a pretty good deal: a 41-cent stamp gets those hopes into the heavens."

Ultimately, each letter will be scanned and put on discs with the help of the education department of NASA. Fitch said he has permission to have the discs put aboard a future space shuttle mission. He acknowledged it's a bit unclear where they will go from there. He hopes they get put on the international space station. That's his hope.

Fitch first began riding for charitable causes 30 years ago when a young cousin died of leukemia. He began his current effort nearly three years ago after the horrific loss of life from the East Asian tsunami. That's when he decided "we needed to look beyond ourselves and into the heavens. These are like letters to heaven of all our hopes and dreams," Fitch said.