

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

26 May, 2014

CONTACT:

Tracie Parker

(323) 960-3500

[MediaRelations@Churchof Scientology.net](mailto:MediaRelations@Churchof Scientology.net)

## **California Officials Back Movement to End Hit-and-Run Epidemic**

*U.S. Congressman Adam Schiff, California State Assemblyman Mike Gatto, and L.A. City Councilmembers Mitch O'Farrell and Tom LaBonge lent their support to Damian Kevitt and hundreds of L.A. bicyclists who rode from the Church of Scientology Los Angeles to Autry Museum in Griffith Park April 27 to take a stand against the hit-and-run crime epidemic in Los Angeles.*

U.S. Congressman Adam Schiff, California State Assemblyman Mike Gatto, and L.A. City Councilmembers Mitch O'Farrell and Tom LaBonge joined Damian Kevitt and some 700 L.A. bicyclists April 27 in "Finish the Ride"—a bike ride to raise awareness on hit-and-run crime.

Damian, a victim of hit-and-run crime, created Finish the Ride to make the streets safe for Los Angeles cyclists and pedestrians.

Last year, more than 21,000 hit-and-run crimes in Los Angeles resulted in some 1,200 injuries and 41 deaths.

On February 17, 2013, Damian, a Scientology minister, and his wife Grace, got on their bikes at the Church of Scientology in Los Angeles for what they expected to be a routine, fun and uneventful Sunday morning ride. They planned to ride to the store for groceries and stop for a picnic at Griffith Park on their way home.

But as they approached the park, the driver of a minivan pulled out into traffic, struck Damian and tore off down the street and onto the I-5 with Damian pinned underneath his car.

If the driver had stopped, Damian would probably have suffered a minor injury at most. Instead, he lost a leg and nearly lost his life.

Thanks to Rose Rubin, a motorist who followed the vehicle onto the freeway to try to identify it or stop the driver, Damian is alive today. She had no idea Damian was trapped under the chassis. And when Damian managed to dislodge himself and she saw his bleeding body fall to the pavement, she slammed on her brakes, making her car a barrier to prevent traffic from driving over him.

With 20 broken bones, road burns over 70 percent of his body, his left leg mangled and his leg amputated, it is truly a miracle that Damian survived.

While still in the hospital, Damian determined to turn his experience into a force for good. He has since become a voice for hit-and-run victims in greater Los Angeles. His decision to get back on his bike has inspired a movement, culminating in the April 27 Finish the Ride bicycle ride that literally finished the ride Damian and his wife were on when he was struck in February 2013.

Damian believes there are important actions we need to take to make the streets of L.A. safer. "It's going to take tougher legislation, police enforcement of the laws, and cyclists and pedestrians becoming more safety-conscious," he says. "But hit-and-run crime is really a symptom of a greater decay of values in

society. Fact is, the laws haven't particularly changed in the past 20 years—the values have. So while the immediate actions need to be taken to prevent loss of life, the actual solution has to include the re-instilling of values."

For just that purpose, Damian had a special edition of *The Way to Happiness* booklet printed with the Finish the Ride logo on the cover and made this available to those who participated in the ride. *The Way to Happiness* is a nonreligious common sense moral code authored by Scientology Founder L. Ron Hubbard.

Damian credits a precept from *The Way to Happiness* as a critical factor in his recovery.

"I applied a precept that states, 'Sometimes others seek to crush one down, to make nothing out of one's hopes and dreams, one's future and oneself.... The real handling of such a situation and such people, the real way to defeat them is to flourish and prosper.'"

And that is exactly what Damian is doing.

To learn more about Damian Kevitt and Finish the Ride, visit [finishtheride.com](http://finishtheride.com) or watch a [video interview on his ordeal](#). To learn more about *The Way to Happiness*, visit [The Way to Happiness website](#).



At the starting line of Finish the Ride at the [Church of Scientology of Los Angeles](#) (left to right) Damian Kevitt's wife Grace, Tracie Parker, Humanitarian Programs Director of the Church of Scientology International; Jennifer Klausner, Executive Director of the L.A. County Bicycle Coalition; City Councilmember Mitch O'Farrell; City Councilmember Tom LaBonge; Damian's mother Michelle Kirkland; Damian Kevitt; California State Assemblyman Mike Gatto; U.S. Congressman Adam Schiff; and Rose Rubin, the woman who saved Damian's life by stopping her car to prevent others from riding over him when he was dragged onto the freeway by a hit-and-run.



More than 700 bicyclists gathered at the Church of Scientology of Los Angeles April 27, 2014, to promote awareness of hit-and-run crime through Finish the Ride.



More than 700 bicyclists joined Damian Kevitt April 27, 2014, to finish the ride he began in February 2013—a ride that nearly took his life. Damian created Finish the Ride to promote awareness of hit-and-run crime.



Finish the Ride bicyclists approach the entrance to the freeway where Damian Kevitt was hit and dragged by a hit-and-run on February 17, 2013. The 27 April ride finished the ride Damian began that fateful day and raised funds for the Los Angeles County Bicycle Coalition and the Challenged Athletes Foundation.



Damian Kevitt crosses the finish line at the Autry Museum in Griffith Park Sunday April 27, 2014, completing the ride he began in February 2013—a ride that nearly took his life.