Relay for America set to arrive in Utah

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A grassroots event that involves runners traveling across the United States as part of the America250 celebration is set to arrive in Utah.

The American 250 Relay features a group of runners carrying the American Flag from the Pacific coast all the way to the National Mall in Washington, D.C,. It's a non-stop run, and the group aims to arrive in D.C. by July 4, in time for national celebrations of the U.S's 250th anniversary.

"There have been people who've run across the country before solo, there have been people who have carried a flag," says Joe Nail, director of Relay for America. "but no one's ever tried to get really the entirety of the American people to join in carrying a flag from coast to coast. We hope that this will be something that [becomes] an annual tradition and inspires people for many years to come."

Having started as a grassroots movement, Relay for America has been relying largely on volunteers. Although it's still relatively early in the run, Nail says their group has already encountered many moments of generosity, painting a different picture of the United States that what many people may be seeing online.

"Contrary to going to a marathon, where you've got aid stations and everything set up for you, we're going town to town and we're relying on the hospitality and generosity of people along the way," says Nail. "[Tuesday] is a perfect example. We're running through the desert in Nevada, and somebody who was following us on Instagram came out and not only ran, I think 15 or 16 miles, but then said, 'hey, as soon as we get to the end of this segment, I want to buy you all pizza'... that's really kind of the core of the American spirit is generosity, caring for your neighbor."

The group departed from San Francisco June 14, and at time of reporting, are approaching the end of their run in Nevada. They're set to cross the Nevada-Utah border early Thursday morning, south of Eskdale. Following major roadways, the group will head to northeast to Nephi, and then follow a route through central Utah as they head to Vernal before heading to Dinosaur, Colorado.

Nail says they're avoiding major metropolitan areas in order to maintain their pace and hit their July 4 timetable. However, the organization encourages people to come out along the way.

"Going 23,000 miles in 20 days, we have to keep about 9:30 average pace," says Nail. "We'd love to see you out there, and every person who comes out, no matter your pace, will get a chance, at least briefly, [with] the American flag."

According to their website, Utah currently tops the leaderboard for the number of registered runners. If you'd like to volunteer, see the full route, or simply follow the journey, you can visit Relay for America's official website.