

LETTER FROM THE EDITOR

Life is like riding a bicycle. To keep your balance, you must keep moving. —Albert Einstein

How we did it is baffling! Around Labor Day weekend, we were preparing ourselves for disaster. The donations were way behind those from last year. We did our best, but it seemed like it just wasn't meant to be this year. Then, all of a sudden, the numbers started to multiply and, by Ride Day, we had far surpassed our best year yet for donations. On September 18, the 5th Annual Lymphoma Research Ride was a monumental success. For the fifth consecutive year, the weather was perfect. Over 250 signed up to ride on 33 teams. There were 100 volunteers ably coordinated again by our friend and lymphoma survivor Lisa, always with a beaming smile. Robin, our ride planner, did her usual superb job so that everyone was in awe of how well the ride was organized. Gary, Lisa's husband, and Alex, another survivor, made sure that the routes were marked so that no one could possibly get lost along the way. And, as of the day of this writing, we have raised almost \$460,000, which brings the total to almost \$2 million since year one.

On Ride Day, the volunteers began arriving at 6 AM. This year we were fortunate to have Meg, Chip, and Jen from the Lymphoma Research Foundation, who immediately became involved in the event and contributed to its success. The morning started off cool and dark, serenely quiet, with just a few of us getting tables and supplies ready. But as the sun rose, a scene transpired that was reminiscent of Field of Dreams—over the hill came the long cavalcade of cars as if it were choreographed. We built it and they certainly came, scores of family members, friends, and other supporters. Bike shop mechanics fixed flats, readjusted brakes, raised seats. The riders proudly adorned themselves with the colorful commemorative bike jerseys. The celebration began with Diane Blum, the CEO of the Lymphoma Research Foundation, who came down from New York to welcome everyone and witness the spirit of the day. Then we launched down the road past fields, mountains, and farms, with the cows, horses, and even alpacas watching us as we rode by. At every turn were volunteers pointing the way and cheering us on. We had wonderful photographers who donated their time and documented the event with 1,135 spectacular electronic photographs (posted on Lymphoma.org). As I scrolled through them, all I saw were people having a great time; everyone was smiling, despite the hills.

However, what is most important are some of the stories.

We had one rider who this year did the 50-mile route with a full head of hair, who had ridden 50 miles last year with a bandana covering her chemotherapy-induced bald



scalp. On the other side, we had riders who had lost their hair to chemotherapy only months ago, who were up in the saddle, pedaling their hearts out. One particular patient comes to mind; I will call her Kate (which is convenient, because that is her name). Her friends and family came to ride not only from our environs, but as far off as Chicago. At 6:30 AM, a big truck pulled up full of their 18 mostly rented bicycles. Unbeknownst to young Kate, they had designed their own bike jerseys, which were adorned with sentiments about Kate vs Hodgkin's, including supportive phrases such as "Team Kate, get on your bike" and other sayings (including that by Al from above) affirming that they would ride to kick cancer's butt. Their demonstration of love for Kate was beautiful. Carl came from West Virginia, Mike from Philadelphia. Children rode for their parents, and parents for their children, including a mother who made the trip up from Florida to ride with her son. Several patients and family members bought bikes just for the occasion. One patient and member of our organizing committee, who had ridden every year, had herniated a lumbar disc and was unable to be a rider, although she volunteered the day before the ride as well as on Ride Day. Her husband rented a tandem on which he and their son rode the 25-mile route.

My wife and I have chaired this event beginning 6 years ago, and it has consumed a large amount of our time and energy. We seriously considered turning it over to someone else and were discussing how we would transition the responsibilities. But with the day of the Ride comes a realization of how much the event means to all involved—the hope, the sense of family—and we start the wheels turning for year number 6.

Until next month . . .

Bruce D. Cheson

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