



ACTIVELIFE

citizencycle.com: Ottawa's source for cyclists of all speeds

Ride the Rideau to make a difference

Cancer survivors and Ottawa Hospital supporters saddle up for 100-km fundraiser

BY TRACEY TONG

Ottawa's Irwin Waldman is not like any other 82-year-old grandfather you've ever met.

He's a cross-country skier and canoeist and has been mountain climbing in Switzerland and cycling in France. And when The Ottawa Hospital Foundation holds its second annual Ride the Rideau on Sept. 10, he will be taking part in the 100-kilometre ride from Ottawa to Merrickville for the second time, with an expected completion time of four hours — faster than many people half his age.

Waldman tends to cycle by himself, but when he learned last year about Ride the Rideau — Eastern Ontario's premier cycling fundraiser in support of cancer research — he immediately signed on.

The three-time cancer survivor, who was first diagnosed with bladder cancer more than 30 years ago, is now recovered. But he wants to do something to support the hospital that gave him his life back.

"If I can pay back what I've taken, then I think it's great," he said.

Cancer-fighting heroes come in all shapes and sizes. Last year, 314 riders raised \$940,000 through Ride the Rideau to support cancer research at the Ottawa Hospital. This year, the foundation is expecting to top 650 riders, and has set the fundraising goal at \$1.8 million. The event supports projects at the Ottawa Hospital Research Institute, including the development of personalized therapies for cancer and the maximization of the potential of

cancer clinical trials.

Among riders are 18 cancer survivors including Andy Kaleta, whose world turned upside down last year after he was diagnosed with oral cancer in his mouth and tongue.

"I felt something was wrong, so I had a biopsy. That's when I was diagnosed with cancer. It happened really fast."

In April 2010, Kaleta underwent a nine-hour surgery at the Ottawa Hospital Cancer Centre. Doctors removed skin from his mouth and tongue, his lymph nodes and grafted skin and muscle from his left arm into his mouth.

A healthy lifestyle enthusiast and avid cyclist who averages 5,000 kilometres a year on his bike, the 51-year-old environmental manager got back on the saddle and to the gym as soon as he was able.

"I've always been active in the community, and this was the perfect opportunity for me," said Kaleta. "The research that this event will fund will make a huge difference to a lot of people. And I want to keep active and fit so I can enjoy my family longer and be a positive role model."

Keeping active was never an issue for Carol Badenoch, even when she was diagnosed with breast cancer in 2002.

"I was totally stunned when they said I had cancer," she said. Even so, she vowed to keep a positive attitude just before undergoing two surgeries and a course of radiation at the Ottawa Hospital Cancer Centre.

"You can curl up in a corner, or you can keep living," she said. "I chose to keep living."



PHOTOS COURTESY OF THE OTTAWA HOSPITAL FOUNDATION

'There's a joy in cycling,' said Irwin Waldman, shown here at last year's inaugural Ride the Rideau cycling fundraiser. 'If you've got wheels, you can go anywhere you want.' The 82-year-old will be getting back on the bike saddle in the second annual Ride the Rideau on Sept. 10.

For the 62-year-old Nepean resident, that means teaching aerobics in addition to training and raising funds for Ride the Rideau, in which she will be participating for the second year.

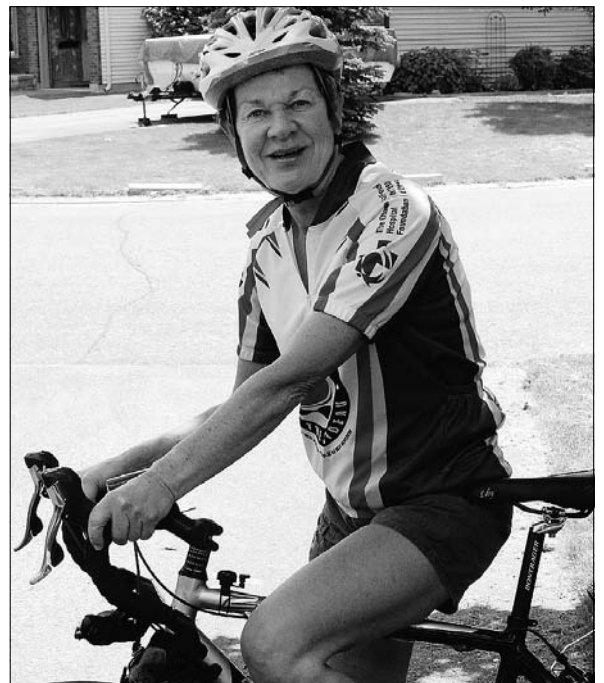
"I'm fortunate to be in a position where I have time and I'm healthy," she said. "By doing the ride, I want to show people that even after a cancer diagnosis, life does move forward."

The event has found champions not only in cancer survivors, but in people of all walks of life, from Starbucks baristas to the CEOs of major companies.

"Cancer is something that affects everyone. Every week, you hear of someone who's been diagnosed," said Claude Des Rosiers of Boone Plumbing and Heating Supply Inc., who, along with Robert Merkley of Merkley Supply Ltd., sponsors the ride. Between them, they have teams that total more than 100 riders.

The event has also found a supporter in Merrickville Mayor Doug Struthers, who is riding as a member of Team Merrickville. Struthers will be hopping on his old CCM bicycle with two-and-a-half working gears as he is a strong supporter of cancer research and loves to cycle.

To learn more about the event or to get involved, visit ridetherideau.ca.



Carol Badenoch has held fundraising events in her neighbourhood to support cancer research, a cause she believes in.



Claude Des Rosiers, left, and Robert Merkley helped to come up with the concept of the ride and are two of the event's biggest champions. Both have recruited dozens of riders for their respective teams.