

Alliance cyclists riding to Hope...for hope

Canucks alumni are teaming with Team Alliance for a ride benefiting Canuck Place.

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Every drop of sweat spilled on the sizzling pavement during the 2007 Ride For Hope had a purpose.

Every beadlet of sweat, every ounce of energy was exerted for a great cause, as cyclists braved searing temperatures eclipsing 30°C last July 11 to raise \$10,960 for Canuck Place Children's Hospice.

Canuck Place not only provides pediatric palliative care for children living with a life-threatening illnesses, but also works as a vital support system for the children's families.



Jeff Bandura (foreground) and Team Alliance are riding from Surrey to Hope to raise funds and awareness for Canuck Place Children's Hospice.

"Our kids are in need, and we can help," said Jeff Bandura of Team Alliance, which is organizing the '08 RFH. "It's great to know that support network is there."

Alliance's Rob Barrett said almost everyone has been affected by cancer at some time or another.

The father of one of the young players on the soccer team he coaches was recently diagnosed with pancreatic cancer.

"It's about giving back," Barrett said. "This is one way of doing it."

Last year, Team Coastal member Duncan Robinson took part in the Ride For Hope while wearing a T-shirt adorned with a photo of his son, who had passed away from cancer.

Bandura and his teammates said all they had to do was look over at Robinson to realize why they decided to take on the gruelling challenge.

The team had the misfortune of cycling the 200 kilometre route on the hottest day of 2007.

"It was hot. Really hot," Alliance member James Carlson said. "But it was something we started and it was something we had to finish. It was a ride for the kids. Yeah, it was uncomfortable at times, but it's uncomfortable to us for a day. Other people have to be uncomfortable all the time."

This year, Team Alliance is ready for whatever Mother Nature can throw at them.

"It doesn't matter," Bandura said. "It could be snowing and we're still going. It's all for the kids. No matter how bad things are, or how bad the elements are, it's nothing compared to what these kids have to go through every day."

Bandura said that despite the scorching weather, last year's ride was a great experience.

"Being that it was the first year, we approached it like a hurry-up offence," he said. "This year, we've learned that it takes a lot more than just jumping on the bikes and riding."

Alliance Principle Ingredients is on board as the major sponsor of the ride. Alliance president Mark Greenhalgh said the decision to support the event was an easy one.

"Jeff [Bandura] approached me about sponsoring a charity ride. This is a local ride, for a local charity that benefits British Columbians," Greenhalgh said. "This is a local charity that benefits B.C.ers as opposed to a national charity. It's nice to see the dollars going towards something we can see and feel here in the Vancouver area."

Last year's inaugural cycling trip from Surrey to Hope was a huge success - the kind of success the team hopes to mirror with this year's event, taking place Wednesday, July 9.

Team Alliance has approximately 15 cyclists participating; but that number could reach as many as 30, depending on how many members from other cycling clubs join in.

Bandura said, for insurance purposes, the number of cyclists will be capped at 30.

Many of the participating cyclists have fundraised for the 2008 RFH, and the host of corporate sponsors on board have helped lift the dollar amount to almost \$24,000 and counting.

Bandura, a member of the Canucks alumni, will be joined by fellow alumni members Terry Bingley and Dean Malkoc, along with Canucks mascot Fin this year.

Cap's South Shore Cycles donated four bicycles worth about \$12,000 for the Canucks alumni members to train on and use during the fundraiser.

The 2008 Ride For Hope starts at about 7:15 a.m. on Wednesday morning, July 9, at Alliance Principle Ingredients, 5712 192nd St.

The cyclists will have the luxury of RCMP escorts at the start of the ride, and at various points of the route.

Ride sponsors are Alliance Principle Ingredients, the Vancouver Canucks alumni, Prospera Credit Union, LaZboy, Canlan Ice Sports, Ritz Catering, Firststar Sports, Artful Things, Team 1040, and Cap's South Shore Cycles.

You can still donate online by visiting www.teamalliance.ca.

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