

Dr. Allan Jeffries: Riding for the People We Love

An Ontario dentist will be cycling across Canada this summer to help raise awareness and funds for children and teenagers living with cancer. Dr. Allan Jeffries of Scarborough, Ontario, is one of the more than 60 cyclists who were selected to be a 'national rider' in the Sears National Kids Cancer Ride. This ambitious charity event will begin June 2, 2008, in Vancouver, B.C., and finish in Halifax, Nova Scotia, and will cover some 7,600 kilometres in just 19 days.

The national riders were chosen based on their lifelong pursuit of health and wellness, a strong belief in volunteerism and philanthropy, and a commitment to improving the quality of life of children and teenagers with cancer. Dr. Jeffries and his fellow cyclists, comprised of cancer survivors, care givers, parents, siblings and average Canadians, will be accompanied by nearly 30 full-time volunteers in support vehicles.

The Gift of Giving

Like so many, Dr. Jeffries' family and friends have been personally affected by cancer. Although his mother passed away in 2006, she was a 16-year survivor of metastasized colon cancer. Dr. Jeffries' brother recently passed away after a battle with terminal cancer, and a close friend from dental school,

Dr. David Scanlon, is also fighting this ubiquitous disease. Dr. Jeffries admits that watching those close to him struggle against cancer is part of his motivation for embarking on this cross-country odyssey.

"When people we love suffer through illness, we often feel inadequate as we don't have the power to change a frightening course of events that may lead to losing our loved ones," he says. "Volunteering and giving our time and attention to doing work for others can help us feel empowered."

In his own life, Dr. Jeffries has experienced the intrinsic rewards that volunteering can provide. "Doing something to benefit others allows us to feel good about who we are," he continues. "It often leads to greater opportunities and allows you to meet like-minded people who have a passion for life."

This passion for life is evident in a fellow national rider on Dr. Jeffries' upcoming journey. Sixteen-year-old Andy Brooks' personal story of coping with cancer is particularly inspiring to Dr. Jeffries. Andy was first diagnosed with cancer at age 3 and he still spends about one week a month at the Hospital for Sick Children in Toronto for treatment. After 10 years of treatments and therapies, Andy celebrated remission at 13, but 2 years later he was diagnosed with intractable epilepsy and is now legally blind — a legacy from the disease itself and the cures to keep him alive. Andy is currently in training for the Kids Cancer Ride and, with the help of his fellow cyclists, he will be making the trek across Canada on a tandem bike.

Cycling for a Cause

Dr. Jeffries only began cycling long distances a few years ago when he and his son David entered a Tour for Kids event in support of Camp Trillium, Camp Oochigeas and Camp Quality, all oncology camps in Ontario. This 4-day tour was organized by the Coast to Coast Against Cancer Foundation — the same group organizing the upcoming Sears National Kids Cancer Ride.

The tour required 2 months of training and took place only a few weeks after Dr. Jeffries' mother passed away. During the event, each morning and evening began and



Dr. Allan Jeffries cycling in his first Tour for Kids charity ride in 2006. Dr. Jeffries and his son David raised \$7,200 for this event.

Photo: Chris Owen Halper, OdysseyProduction.ca



Three young campers at Camp Oochigeas, an oncology camp that benefits from the Coast to Coast Against Cancer Foundation cycling events.

finished with a personal story from a young cancer survivor. “The bravery and courage of these children brought tears to our eyes and made the 100 to 200 kilometres of daily cycling seem effortless in comparison to the challenges faced by these young people and their families,” recalls Dr. Jeffries.

This June, Dr. Jeffries’ thoughts will be with his mother, brother and Dr. Scanlon during the more challenging moments of the coast-to-coast ride. “I want them to feel my strength and know that I’ll be sending prayers for them while reflecting on the preciousness of family and friendship,” he acknowledges.

Active Volunteering

Dr. Jeffries has always tried to remain physically fit by playing hockey, curling, golfing, skiing and running. About 3 years ago, he made a decision to increase his fitness level and began training for half-marathons. “I gave up curling and decided to no longer inflict my golf game on my friends, in order to spend more time on aerobic activities,” he quips.

Dr. Jeffries launched into his current training program in December 2007. Designed by CanFit Pro, his 6-month regimen includes cycling 6 to 7 days a week and involves daily core strengthening, weights and targeted hill training, intervals, and long, slow aerobic workouts. “The hardest month will be April when I will be exercising in the morning before work, doing a routine of stretches at lunch followed by evening workouts,” he says. This gruelling training schedule is on top of maintaining his dental practice. “When something is important, you find a way to manage time,” states Dr. Jeffries.

He is hoping that his dental colleagues can help out with this charitable event that is dear to his heart. “Dentists are caregivers and mentors and leaders in the community,” he continues. “Leaders volunteer, and leaders understand that the gift of giving carries the most rewards in life.” Colleagues can help Dr. Jeffries reach or surpass his fundraising goal of \$25,000. Funds raised through this event will be shared between Canada’s 17 pediatric oncology hospitals and charitable organizations dedicated to improving the quality of life of children and their families living with cancer.

“You can participate as a volunteer as the ride goes through your community, by joining us on single-day stage rides of 25 to 200 kilometres, or by participating in one of the much shorter family rides as we pass through major cities,” he explains.

“The success and power of this event has very little to do with the national riders,” he believes. “It will be measured by the thousands of other riders joining us as we pass through, and by the funds we will raise for children’s cancer causes.”

THE AUTHOR

Sean McNamara is writer/editor at the Canadian Dental Association.

Acknowledgments: JCDA would like to thank Ms. Louise Cantelon, the national director of events for the Coast to Coast Against Cancer Foundation, for her assistance in preparing this article.

How Can You Help?

Visit the Sears National Kids Cancer Ride website (www.NationalKidsCancerRide.com) for details.

Donations can be made online by searching for rider ‘Allan Jeffries’ via the website. You can follow Dr. Jeffries’ progress leading up to, during and after the ride at the ‘Riders Blog’ section. The ride also needs volunteers with a wide range of skills and time availability.

You can cycle alongside Dr. Jeffries in a short community ride or in a longer stage ride. Registration fees for these rides vary; the fundraising minimum is \$150. To become a regional or national sponsor, contact Dr. Jeffries at email: DorsetDental@Rogers.com or tel.: (416) 261-2946. □