

BULLETIN

Recreation therapist rides for lung research

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by YUKIE KURAHASHI

How far would you go to help cure lung diseases? How about 5000 kilometres, across North America? On a bike?

That's what Recreation Therapist Cindy Bouvet is doing right now, as this magazine goes to press. She is taking part in The Big Ride Across America, joining a group of 250 cyclists from across Canada and the US, who are raising awareness and funds for lung health across North America.

"As a recreation therapist I have witnessed the incredible emotional and physical devastation that lung diseases cause," she says. She is riding to honour all lung disease sufferers, but is thinking especially of two friends. "I am dedicating this ride to Jeannine, who has recently been diagnosed with lung cancer, and Andrea, who suffers from cystic fibrosis."

Bouvet, who had raised \$20,000 by the time she left on her cycling tour, says she was inspired to join The Big Ride when she met Andrea on her unit at St. Pauls Hospital. "I saw her receiving chest therapy," Bouvet says. "The therapy is a pounding on her back, every day. People with CF require that to release the mucus that builds up in their lungs."

Shortly afterwards, while on a 200-kilometre bike ride organized by the BC Lung Association, Bouvet says she couldn't stop thinking about Andrea. "That weekend I saw a slide show put on by Big Riders from last year. Four of them were from BC. The ride just wouldn't go away. I knew that I had to do it!"

Bouvet asked for an unpaid leave from her job, and then asked Andrea for permission to dedicate her Ride to her. "She's a beautiful young woman," Bouvet says. "In December, Andrea and her family participated in a living donor double lung transplant in which her dad, Bill, and her brother Bruce each gave a lobe of their lungs. Hopefully, with the support of family and friends, she'll continue to get better," she added. "She really has become an inspiration. She's an amazing young woman."

Cindy Bouvet's empathy for Andrea is easy to understand. As a recreation therapist, Bouvet says her job is to help people get the most out of life. "That's the reason I love it, and I'm so passionate about it," she says. "As recreation therapists we meet with patients on an individual basis, assess their needs, and implement very specific therapeutic interventions."

"We try to alleviate some of the stress of being in the hospital, decrease social isolation, and assist people in developing the skills to have healthy leisure lifestyles in the community," she adds. "Using recreation as a tool, we provide opportunities for social interaction, leisure education and skill development, self expression and personal growth. Recreation therapy values people as the whole person. We believe that a healthy leisure lifestyle is necessary for total wellness."

In cycling from Seattle, Washington to Washington, DC, the cyclists will take turns pulling the Dream Machine ... a wagon filled with hospital bracelets linked as " The Chain of Hope" remembering those who live or have lived with lung disease.

Bouvet invites everyone to send her the names of people they know who have suffered from lung disease, so she can take them with her on the trip. "I would like to write their names on a hospital bracelet and place it in the Dream Machine. I want everyone to submit lots of names so that I know that Im carrying the family and friends of loved ones." Along with the three other Canadians on this years tour, Bouvet will pull the Dream Machine on Canada Day.

Over time, Bouvet has become good friends with Andrea, whose story has been featured on BCTV. "Andrea and I are the Proverbial Turtles," Bouvet says, "and everybody who sends in a donation gets an adorable turtle brooch, and can be a member of the Proverbial Turtle Club. All the money raised will be directed towards world-class pulmonary research at St. Pauls Hospital in Vancouver, through the BC Lung Association."

Bouvet says Andrea and her mother raised the first thousand dollars for Bouvets Big Ride by making and selling 200 turtle brooches. "Were Proverbial Turtles because we might be slow, but were going to win in the end."

For more information on The Big Ride Across America, see Cindy Bouvets website at www3.telus.net/cindysbigride. Bouvet will be posting updates as she travels across North America. Contact her at proverbialturtle@hotmail.com.

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