

**RIDE FOR
HOPE**
Eleuthera, Bahamas

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Saturday, April 4th 2009

Support for memorable event keeps growing

The first cyclist to register for the 2009 Ride for Hope did so a week after last year's event. A veteran of all three rides, the New Yorker said, "I plan my yearly vacations around the Ride for Hope. I wouldn't miss it for the world!"

Two weeks later, in May of 2008, the second cyclist registered. This time, however, the rider had never before participated in the Ride for Hope. For three weeks he had heard inspiring stories from friends who rode and he wanted to make sure he was signed up for 2009.

That's how it is. In three short years, the Ride for Hope has become the country's most successful one-day charitable fundraiser and has earned a well-deserved reputation for being a truly memorable event.

People of all ages participate and at every level imaginable. "I literally haven't been on a bike in decades", said Patrice before the 2008 start, "so I am just going for 10 miles." Patrice did 30 miles, the inspiration and enthusiasm of the riders around her carried her along easily. After she finished,

(Continued on page 2)



Ride for Hope 2008: Over 200 participants gathered for the group photo in North Eleuthera. Ages ranged from 2 to 75. Some cyclists had not ridden while others had gotten in only a few weeks of preparation. Collectively they rode more than 7,000 miles on the day and raised more than \$300,000 for cancer prevention and research programs in the Bahamas. Not bad for a day on the bike!

Ride for Hope is open to everyone: the young and young at heart, seasoned cyclists, beginners, weekend warriors, kids, moms and dads, grandparents. We raise money for cancer care and treatment programs. We also raise hope for those afflicted and awareness among the population at large that together we can make a difference!



Everything you need to know to register, to ride, and really understand this great



What exactly happens on the day of the Ride

In the early dawn hours of Ride for day, a band of volunteers arrives at the Staging Area to begin set up. The orchestrated pandemonium as the road in North Eleuthera is transformed to accommodate more than 200 bicyclists, 300-plus people, support vehicles, tents, and endless supplies.

As the sun rises higher the cyclists begin to arrive. They busy themselves with their own preparations and it doesn't take long for the Staging Area to hum with activity.

The arrival of every participant at the finish line is celebrated with great enthusiasm. No matter how far a cyclist goes or how long it takes them, their journey is recognized as the greatest achievement it is!

Charitable event ... Continued from page 1)

... said with deep pride in her own accomplishment, "That was the most amazing experience of my life!"

At one end of the spectrum, five year olds bring their bikes—some with training wheels—to the Ice Cream Shop and back. They are welcomed at the finish line like the champions they are, while at the other end seasoned cyclists set their sights on the full 100 miles—a Century Ride, the "Holy Grail" of sorts for cyclists.

Families enter, companies form teams, friends band together for support and fun or with a common purpose in mind. Fathers and sons set off together forming special memories and iconic images as they move along the route together. A family of four wrote afterwards, "We had a memorable and very emotional day! It couldn't have been any better!" One cyclist, who has participated in a number of charitable bike

events in 4 different countries said, "Thank you so much for all your efforts. This was probably the best organized event ever—and we had so much fun." A group of girl friends entered together. They sent in an email the very night of the ride. "Thank you for the tremendous effort ... the organization was first class and the support was tremendous."

Even volunteers are deeply moved by the event. Said one, "I was a first-time volunteer. It was a wonderful experience and I was proud and privileged to be a part of the effort. Hats off all around. I'm anxiously awaiting next year's event."

Another had this to say: "First of all let me say 'Well Done!' The Ride for Hope was an amazing event. I was so excited to be there helping the cyclists achieve their goals. Sadly though, I will not be able to volunteer next year—I intend to ride instead!"

Group photo at 9:30 am is the one that marks the day that everyone—participants, volunteers, sponsors, workers—are all together. A real sense that a great adventure is about to begin fills the air and envelops everyone.

The Ride begins at 10 am. To enthusiastically cheering those going 100 miles are off first. At 10 minute intervals each subsequent distance group is sent off with the intention being to spread participants across the route evenly and not overwhelm the support system in place. There is no urgency among the riders for once everyone knows the Ride for Hope is not a

While the cyclists set off, intense preparations are happening along the route. Support trucks deliver water and ice, volunteers mix huge batches of Gatorade, they lay out nutrition bars, bananas, and specialized food. Motorcycle police keep watch over the riders' safety. As a precaution, nurses take up their posts along the route. Volunteers man the support posts and keep them faithfully throughout the day. Participants ride distances of

(Continued on

Volunteers: the quiet heroes of the Ride for Hope

at happens ... Continued from page 2)

own choosing and at their own pace. They and drinks, nutrition, support and camaraderie along the way. Common purpose binds participants and volunteers; the success of each participant's journey becomes a collective mission for all involved.

back at the Staging Area, another group of volunteers prepares for the Après Ride festival. By the time riders return they will be able to enjoy stretching sessions, a great tasting lunch, beverages and music—a festival in their honor! Kids will be able to entertain themselves on bouncy castles, water slides and with face painting.

The Après Ride becomes the place where everyone gathers throughout the afternoon. Stories are told and re-told, special moments are relived. And each time another rider finishes, everyone stops to clap, cheer and celebrate the success of another participant.

The Ride for Hope is a wonderful event. You don't have to be a "cyclist" to participate. A sense of adventure to do something memorable for a great cause is all you need!

Much focus is on the cyclists in the Ride for Hope. Truth be told, without the corps of volunteers who support the riders throughout the day, the success of the Ride for Hope would be impossible.

In 2008 over 100 people gave freely of their time to make the Ride for Hope run smoothly. They did such a great job that many riders based their decision to return in 2009 on the experience created for them by volunteers in last year's ride.

The Eleuthera Chapter of the Cancer Society has been stellar each year, organizing volunteers for Support Tents, Support Vehicles, and much more. The Island School takes on the 100-mile Support Tent. With great enthusiasm kids and teachers celebrate the arrival of the top cyclists with cowbells and costumes and help the riders with their needs. In Gregory Town, under the direction of Island Made's proprietress

Pam Thompson, the volunteers become so dedicated to the Ride for Hope that celebrations at the Gregory Town Mile Support Tent rival those at the Staging Area! "You have *got* to get to Gregory Town!" riders are overheard. Nurses, policemen, ambulance men, private citizens also pitch in to help. In works, the volunteer arm of the Cay Foundation, contributes tirelessly to the many needs at the Staging Area and family of the Nassau firm of Sweeting O'Brien manned the Island Shop Support Tent in 2008. Everyone received a champion's welcome and home memories to last a lifetime.

You don't have to ride a bike to contribute to the success of the Ride for Hope. Volunteers are needed along the length of the course. There are many tasks. They are long, but it is rewarding and truly memorable. If you are interested contact



Participants find their bikes waiting for them at the Staging Area. For expediency's sake they are shipped ahead of time.



Cycling not for you? Volunteers are the quiet, behind-the-scene heroes of the Ride for Hope. From Eleuthera, New Providence, Grand Bahama and even the U.S. they commit themselves to a very long day of hard work in support of our great cause.

