

FIGHTING CANCER ON THE ROAD
A 500-MILE BIKE TREK FROM CANADA RAISES \$77,000 FOR RESEARCH

by LAUREN ROTH, The Morning Call

Sunday, August 15, 1999

Doreen and Chuck Canfield of Allentown say they are lucky they don't know what cancer feels like. But to honor a relative of theirs who died of cancer, and for all others suffering with the disease, the two elementary school teachers biked 500 miles last week to raise money for the American Cancer Society.

The Canfields and their 38 fellow riders finished an intense six-day trip from Montreal to Palmerton, Carbon County, Saturday, the ninth time the Pennsylvania Perimeter Ride Against Cancer has been completed.

First held in 1983, the biannual ride was established by Allentown resident Bob Freed. The cancer death of a 17-year-old cousin prompted action by Freed, who came up with the idea of the bike ride along with the Rev. Paul Schoffstall of New Tripoli. Both organizers have biked all of the rides.

Debbie Dagg, a first-time rider from Phoenixville, Chester County, said she biked for "a good challenge and an excellent cause." It was 37 degrees out when Dagg and the others started their trek Monday in Canada. Saturday's muggy, near 90-degree temperatures greeted the bikers, mostly Lehigh Valley residents, upon their return.

The riders showed impressive endurance and dedication, said North Catasauqua nurse Sally Siegfried, who provided medical and moral support along the way. "It was amazing to see these guys and gals sleep on a church floor, eat a cold breakfast and then go out and bike 80 miles in the cold and wind," she said.

The riders raised \$77,000 by Saturday, with more expected. Pat Corpora of Center Valley raised \$13,000 herself. And, riders have raised more than \$500,000 in all the years of the event, Freed said.

Some of the money was used to purchase a van for the Lehigh Valley Unit of the American Cancer Society. It is used to ferry cancer patients and their families to hospital visits.

Fifteen percent of the funds will go to Dream Come True, a Lehigh Valley organization that grants wishes to seriously ill children. The ride's donation should fund two wishes, Freed said.

The remainder of the money will go to the cancer society for research, education and patient services, Freed said. The first ride was a 1000-mile challenge that traced the perimeter of Pennsylvania. This year's ride and all others since have been 500 miles, each traversing different terrain. The next ride, planned for 2001, may start in either Vermont or Virginia, Freed said.

The ride is not organized by the Cancer Society. "As far as I know, we are kind of unique" for being independent, Freed said. The American Cancer Society is grateful for the help. Ron Glass, treasurer of the local unit's board of directors, said that the bikers' dedication is inspiring. "Seeing everyone here -- that helps me keep on going," he said.

The ride draws people from as far away as California. Scott Johnson of Tustin, Calif., is a former Pennsylvania resident joining the perimeter ride for the first time. A close friend of his is fighting cancer, "and I wanted to do it for him." Exhausted by the exertion, Johnson said he felt "very proud" to have finished.

At age 58, Allentown dentist Karl Glassman was the oldest of the riders, who ranged upward from age 17. Glassman, a five-time rider, said he is glad he can still help. "It's an incredible feeling for me to use that which I am given -- a strong body -- and use it to enjoy myself and help others at the same time," Glassman said. "It's a great combination."