

Pennsylvania Perimeter Riders raise \$75,000 for cancer

■ Bicyclists pedal 560 miles from New Hampshire to Palmerton on group's 10th ride.

By **CHRIS PARKER**
Of The Morning Call

Some local pedal power has geared up to fight cancer and help make life a little easier for those battling the disease.

A group of about 40 bicyclists called the Pennsylvania Perimeter Riders has raised about \$500,000 since 1983. Most of the money goes to the Lehigh Valley Unit of the American Cancer Society.

LEHIGH VALLEY

"It's a remarkable thing, and they do it from their hearts," said Mark Drill, regional manager of the Lehigh Valley Unit. "They are a wonderful group of people."

About 15 percent of the money raised goes to Dream Come True, an organization that fulfills the wishes of chronically and terminally ill children.

The cycling group is one man's best shot at fighting a demon that has taken two loved ones from his family.

Bob Freed of Allentown helped form the group after he lost a cousin, Frank Wint, 17, of Lancaster to cancer in 1981.

"That had a pretty dramatic effect on me," Freed said. "We had been running partners, we had done marathons."

Freed's father was diagnosed with cancer in 1983 and died the day the group returned from its first ride.

The first biennial Pennsylvania Perimeter Ride was a 1,000-mile trek around the state's perimeter.

Now, Freed said, the group keeps the ride between 500 and 600 miles over six days.

"One week is a lot to ask for someone to give up," he said.

This year the group began in Littleton, N.H., on Aug. 5 for its 10th ride. The cyclists rolled into Palmerton on Aug. 11.

The 560-mile ride raised about \$75,000, Freed said.

"This ride was our toughest because of the heat wave," he said. "And we came through fairly mountainous areas: the White Mountains of New Hampshire, the Green Mountains in Vermont, the Berkshires in Massachusetts, the Adirondacks in New York and then through the Poconos and Appalachian areas coming into Pennsylvania."

Cyclists range in age from 11 to 63. Freed's two daughters, who are 11 and 15, alternated rides on a tandem bike with Freed for about half the trip.

It was the first Pennsylvania Perimeter Ride for Barry Warmkessel, 47, of Allentown.

"I lost a sister, Dolly Lenhart, to cancer, and my mother, Peg Warmkessel, is a 40-year survivor of breast cancer," he said. "It certainly is a worthwhile cause. It was a fantastic experience."

Warmkessel typically rides at least 10 miles a day. But he picked up the pace to train for the trek.

"I took longer rides and prepared. It went well," he said. "This won't be my last ride."

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