

GWINNETT DAILY POST

10/3/2008 12:01:00 AM

Cycling gives purpose, treatment
Frazier uses riding to help with Parkinson's
symptoms, raise money

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LAWRENCEVILLE - Cycling has been part of **Cathy Frazier's** life since she met her husband Ralph, who has been heavily involved in the sport for more than three decades.

It's the family business, with Frazier Cycling run out of their home. Both their teenage children, Nicholas and Zoe, race. They have jerseys hanging in the foyer, boxes of Powerbars and bikes are all over the house.

"Cycling has been part of my life for a long time," Cathy said.

Eleven years ago, Cathy was diagnosed with Parkinson's disease.

Five years ago, she was on the forefront of a pioneering study linking cycling and an improvement in the symptoms of Parkinson's, a progressive brain disorder that affects the body's ability to control movement.

Two years ago, Frazier Cycling held the first Allgood Cycle for Parkinson's Criterium. Participation numbers tripled the second year and, through the race, over \$10,000 has been raised for the Georgia chapter of the American Parkinson's Disease Association.

On Saturday, the third annual and newly expanded event kicks off. Racers from across the Southeast converge on Gwinnett this weekend to help fight Parkinson's. There's also more than \$5,000 in prize money up for grabs.

"We put this on to raise funds for innovative research for Parkinson's that will improve the quality of life for patients," Cathy said. "The other reason we have this is because we have a kids' cycling team, and junior cycling, until we started getting involved, was not very prevalent here. Our kids couldn't race. Nobody wanted to hold races for juniors because there weren't enough juniors. So it was kind of a vicious cycle.

"So we had our own race for Parkinson's that includes junior categories and have kids from all around the Southeast come and race."

With Cathy's diagnosis and the family's business, the reason for having a cycling event to benefit Parkinson's research is obvious. But recent studies also indicate cycling can reduce the symptoms of Parkinson's.

A tandem bike ride across Iowa by Cathy, her husband and Dr. Jay Alberts was the genesis for this research.

At the time, Alberts was a research scientist at Georgia Tech and a member of Frazier Cycling. He talked Cathy into the 469-mile ride.

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Staff Photo: Josh D. Weiss
From left, Ralph, Cathy, Zoe and Nicholas Frazier put together a race that is run by Ralph and Cathy's company, Frazier Cycling. Cathy has Parkinson's and the race benefits the American Parkinson's Disease Association.

"He and my husband would trade off," Cathy said. "When you're in a tandem, you're clipped in, so I have to go as fast as the person in front of me, I have no choice. Both my husband and Dr. Alberts are very fast cyclists. My legs have to go as fast as theirs do and sometimes you go down hills at 49 miles an hour. And you have to keep on pedaling."

After the race they discovered Cathy's symptoms had improved.

"Our original goal was just to raise money and show how cycling can improve the quality of life for Parkinson's patients - just with exercise in general," Cathy said. "Then we found out it might be specific for Parkinson's."

"Based on that, Dr. Alberts and I started this non-profit foundation called Pedaling for Parkinson's that is specifically to raise money, to raise awareness, but also to do innovative research."

Dr. Alberts has since transferred to the Cleveland Clinic, and there he received a grant to study further what he and Cathy found of the roads of Iowa. Using stationary bikes in a lab, he got the same results and the research was recently featured on NBC's nightly news.

It actually completes an interesting chain of events.

Dr. Alberts only got involved in cycling after he met Cathy, who was participating in a Parkinson's study of his regarding hand flexibility.

"That's why the race is so exciting," Cathy said. "You actually see something come around full circle."

Teaming up with the Gwinnett Sports Council and Top View Sports allowed the Fraziers to turn the race into a two-day event this year.

Top View Sports will produce Saturday's road race and offered their timing and scoring services at no charge for Sunday's criterium on the Georgia Gwinnett College campus in Lawrenceville. Sunday's event will be spectator friendly due to the course layout and additional family activities.

The event's goal is to raise more funds to help ease the burden and find a cure for those suffering from Parkinson's. There is no cure yet.