

Bicycling event to benefit Parkinson's disease research

By Jamie Ward
Staff Writer

LAWRENCEVILLE - Bicycle racing enthusiasts will converge on Gwinnett County this weekend to support a good cause and to try to take home a piece of the \$3,000 prize pie.

With the fourth annual Allgood Cycle for Parkinson's weekend kicking off Saturday, people probably aren't aware that bicycling and Parkinson's disease have something in common.

"While it may not seem that cycling and Parkinson's disease are related, there is currently an innovative research study that proves that cycling does indeed reduce the symptoms of Parkinson's disease," Cathy Frazier of Suwanee-based Frazier Cycling said.

Frazier should know. It was her 2003, 469-mile tandem bike ride across Iowa with her husband and a doctor that started the research because her symptoms improved.

Frazier was diagnosed with Parkinson's in 1997. About 1.5 million Americans suffer from the disease and there is no cure.

"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," Frazier said in a 2008 story that appeared in the Daily Post. "Then we found out it might be specific for Parkinson's."

Parkinson's disease, which results in the loss of dopamine production, is a progressive brain disorder that affects the body's ability to control movement.

On Saturday, cyclists from around the Southeast will ride to raise money and ease the burden of those who suffer from the disease. It's their hope that money raised will lead to finding a cure for the disease.

"We have two objectives for the race," Frazier said. "Putting on a top quality race event for local and regional cyclists and raising awareness and funds for the American Parkinson's Disease Association."

In the past three years, Frazier Cycling has raised more than \$10,000 for the association's Georgia chapter. This year's event is also included in the Georgia Cycling Gran Prix, the state's newest bike race point series which includes 12 events between February and August.

On Sunday, like in years past, Georgia Gwinnett College will allow spectators to view bike racing up close and personal as riders compete on the 0.8 mile criterium course at speeds of more than 25 mph.

To promote junior cycling for those age 14 and under, Norcross-based Blue Competition Cycles and Frazier Cycling are giving away a 2009 RD1 model road bike to one junior who races in both the road race and the criterium. The bike retails for just under \$2,000.

This two-day event is also being sponsored by the Gwinnett Sports Commission, which falls under the umbrella of the Gwinnett Convention and Visitors Bureau.

Pete Sherrard, a commission spokesman, said the event supports the county in several ways, from providing an economic impact through hotel room bookings to increasing awareness of the sport of cycling.

For more information on the race, visit www.fraziercycling.com.