

Survivor ?overwhelmed by support? in Ride to Conquer Cancer



By Jake Courtepatte

As a visual artist by trade, Vicki Carruthers is always looking to create inspiration in her work. But this weekend, that inspiration will come instead from a pair of wheels and a 200-kilometre route from Toronto to Niagara Falls. Carruthers, a resident of Aurora for the past 28 years, will be one of hundreds of participants in the Enbridge Ride to Conquer Cancer, an annual cycling event that raises hundreds of thousands of dollars to support cancer treatment at the Princess Margaret Cancer Centre.

'I'm overwhelmed with the support I've received from friends and family,' said Carruthers. 'I'm so grateful.'

As is the case with so many Canadians, Carruthers has been heavily affected by the disease in her lifetime. She lost her mother to breast cancer that later spread to her ovaries when she was just fourteen and, at the age of 54, was diagnosed with breast cancer herself after testing positive for Herceptin, a protein which promotes the growth of cancer cells.

Going through chemotherapy and other procedures, she Rides in hope that her three daughters, age 24, 27, and 29, never have to experience what she did.

'I had wonderful treatment and care, and have seen firsthand what a difference research makes in the treatment of cancer.'

Completing the Scotiabank half marathon four years ago to raise money for the Canadian Cancer Society, Carruthers said she was 'looking for a change,' or a 'new goal.'

A good friend of hers in Toronto, sitting in Princess Margaret while her husband underwent treatment for mouth cancer, happened upon a poster for the event and sent Carruthers a text asking if she wanted to join.

'I didn't even hesitate. I said 'yes,' thinking to myself, 'I'm crazy, I am terrified of riding, but cancer sucks!'

When her friend was forced to withdraw due to her husband's illness, Carruthers recruited her friends from Aurora, Sue Marshall and Michelle Hatt, to fundraise and train with for the past six months.

Over that time of spinning, weights, and rowing, Carruthers has developed a passion for cycling and anxiously awaits the big day on Saturday.

'I have met many wonderful people, and I know on the day of the race I will meet many more ...I love conversation and meeting people. I anticipate I will cry a lot on the ride.'

'I want to show my girls that you need to get out and make a difference...I want to be a good role model for them.'

Those looking to make a donation can do so at www.conquercancer.ca/goto/vickicarruthers.

Two out of five Canadians will be diagnosed with cancer in their lifetime. Every day, 555 Canadians will be diagnosed with cancer and 216 will die from the disease.

2017 marks the 10th annual Ride in Ontario, with similar Rides scheduled throughout the summer in Quebec, Alberta, and British Columbia. The Ride to Conquer Cancer series is Canada's largest peer-to-peer fundraising event.

In just nine years, the Ontario Ride has raised more than \$155 million for cancer research across the province, and has become the

largest cycling fundraiser in Canadian history. Since 2008, the Ride to Conquer Cancer event series has raised over \$339 million across Canada.