

October 30, 2009

Dear Friends,

We did it! Miles for Myeloma is now five years old, and we have raised nearly \$1.2 million dollars to find better ways to treat the ugly disease multiple myeloma and its relatives amyloidosis and Waldenstrom's disease. Thank you to all of you who have given so generously to the Miles for Myeloma mission.

This year, we cycled from Evansville to Indianapolis in two days, covering more than 200 miles, climbing some 9,000 feet and burning more than 7,000 calories. (What a deal!) I have been asked repeatedly: How do I do it? My answer is simple: How do our patients do it? How do their families do it? I am in awe at their strength, their faith and the love they exhibit each and every day they have to deal with the rollercoaster of living with these diseases. Like us as cyclists, these patients and their families travel an uncertain path. They do not know when there is an awful hill to climb around the corner or a nasty downhill slide to ride out. They are not sure which direction the winds might be blowing from. Despite all of that uncertainty, most of our patients are sure of one thing: Life is beautiful and it is worth the ride.

With that in mind, more than a dozen cyclists – a group made up of the adult children of patients, my best friends and my IU colleagues – left Evansville on a sunny, yet crisp Friday morning, wearing our Miles for Myeloma cycling jerseys, riding our bicycles through several small, beautiful Southern Indiana towns. The night before the ride began the forecast was calling for rain and wind all day. But our RV driver (affectionately known as Pilot Bill) reminded me that Tom Scheer, the Father of Miles for Myeloma, would “take care” of the weather. He sure sent us excellent weather for riding – not a drop of rain the entire ride! On Friday the sun was up, the wind was behind us and the pace was fast. We felt great in general until about 70 miles into the ride. At that point, some of us had to look deep into our souls, remembering the journeys of all those facing myeloma, to keep going through the uphills and to manage the strong crosswinds.

The RV stopped every 30 miles or so, and the Pilot and his crew brought out a wonderful spread of nourishing food for us. That certainly replenished our bodies but our souls were mostly replenished by seeing the efforts of the volunteers. There were patients, family members and friends who were there supporting us along the way. We never felt afraid – we have never been that well cared for before! We rode 123 miles in seven hours the first day before landing in Bedford for a nice pizza dinner and massages from a colleague at the IU Simon Cancer Center.

Please see reverse.



MILES FOR MYELOMA | SUPPORTING MYELOMA RESEARCH AT INDIANA UNIVERSITY

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On Saturday, we left Bedford to travel to Indianapolis, covering 80 more miles and climbing more than 3,000 feet. Other riders, including a cyclist from last year who is one of our patients, joined us for the second day. Last year this patient was in remission; this year he has developed a relapse of his myeloma. But he was not going to be denied the opportunity to carry the torch for himself and his fellow patients. He postponed the initiation of his treatment so that side effects would not prevent him from participating in this event. He rode along with a fan club of colleagues and friends. His presence motivated us not to feel weak or question the reasons why we are putting ourselves through this agony. He covered the 80+ miles with pride and smiles that warmed our hearts on a cold, windy day.

For the last 10 miles, we were joined by more riders who are battling multiple myeloma. Our friends Myron, Larry and Bob escorted us onto the IUPUI campus to a rousing welcome by patients, friends and family. After quick showers, the cyclists joined our annual dinner for patients with myeloma and related diseases and their families. More than 330 people attended! The keynote speaker was Elijah Alexander, a previous Indianapolis Colt defensive player who is on a personal mission to put an end to multiple myeloma. At the age of 35, he was diagnosed with this disease, and he spoke to us about his journey over the last three years. He focused on the “team” made up of the patients, the family and the healthcare providers, and the important role each team member plays in winning this game. Mr. Alexander spoke about the ups and downs he faced when he was told he had an incurable disease. He was anything but selfish – in fact, he was thinking about the future for everyone else. He wants to see his children reach various milestones in their lives, from throwing their first footballs, to reading their first books, to becoming productive members of society. His personal journey resonated with both patients and those who love them. Mr. Alexander lifted our spirits and sounded as if he never wonders, “Why me?” To him, having this disease was another challenge that will bring meaning to life.

The guests at the dinner then listened to my colleague Dr. Attaya Suvannasankha give an update about how we are going to overcome multiple myeloma through research. Her talk gave us an excellent summary of current research around the world and at our center. Her work gives us hope that we are on the right track in achieving our mission. My friend and fellow cyclist Dr. Chris Fausel, a clinical pharmacologist at the IU Simon Cancer Center, then gave the group an excellent summary of myeloma drugs and how to overcome their side effects. He then touched on the role and limitations of alternative and complementary medications in myeloma treatment.

It is safe to say that the fifth annual Miles for Myeloma journey was another successful step toward our goal. **I am more confident than ever that our collective efforts will make our goal a reality.** We must cure these diseases that make life so difficult for so many. Our team is strong and our mission is clear. We shall not surrender to fear, pain or despair. Our faith is strong and our family is united to raise the awareness and the funds needed to cure these diseases.

I am so glad to be part of this family and I wish all of you good health and peace.

Thank you,



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