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Connecticut Challenge Hosts Record Number of Cyclists for 5th Anniversary Charity Bike Ride
498 Cyclists from 64 Communities Ride Together for Cancer Survivors

The sun was hot, but the hearts of 498 cyclists created the real warmth at the 5th annual Connecticut Challenge on July 25th in Fairfield. The record number of riders came from 64 Connecticut towns and 12 other states to ride together in support of cancer survivors.

As he looked out over the crowd at the starting line, co-founder, John Ragland of Westport, could not control his excitement. “We ask a whole lot of people who want to cycle in the Connecticut Challenge. Everyone here has committed to raising a lot of money just to ride today. The fact that we’ve seen an almost 20% increase in participation over last year tells us that our message is getting out there – that people can and want to do more to help the cancer survivors in their lives,” he said.

The day started on a high note with the ceremonial Lap of Honor around the church green by 30 cancer survivors, including several currently undergoing treatment for their cancers. “This is the first thing that happens in the day, but it is the part people remember the most,” said Ragland. “There isn’t a dry eye in the crowd.”

From that point, cyclists ranging from 6 to 77 years old rode close to 25,000 miles, including 93 who took on the challenge of 100 miles, considered by most to be “New England’s Toughest Century Ride.” When all is said and done, the cyclists hope to raise \$750,000, an average of \$1,500 per rider.

Ragland and Jeff Keith of Fairfield, a cancer survivor and long-time cancer fundraiser, founded the Connecticut Challenge in 2005. Their only goal was to create a cancer survivorship clinic in Connecticut to help the state’s 120,000 survivors deal with the challenges many of them face following the treatment phase of their disease. Since its inception, the organization has raised over \$2 million and now supports survivorship programs at St. Vincent’s Medical Center, Stamford Hospital, Connecticut Children’s Medical Center and Yale Cancer Center. According to Ragland, “we are only just starting. We are focusing our efforts for the next year on expanding this network to include all of the hospitals in the state. They all treat cancer patients. We want to help them develop programs to continue supporting these people beyond the end of their treatments, a mostly underserved area in cancer care.”

About the Connecticut Challenge

The Connecticut Challenge was founded in 2005 to create supportive care resources for cancer survivors in Connecticut. The organization currently supports existing or developing survivorship programs at Yale Cancer Center, Connecticut Children’s Medical Center in Hartford, St. Vincent’s Medical Center in Bridgeport and Stamford Hospital. The CT Challenge also provides research grants, sponsors medical symposiums and promotes survivor education and awareness events. The organization raises money primarily through the annual Connecticut Challenge charity bike ride. The ride starts and finishes in Fairfield, CT. Riders of all ages and skill levels register for a 12, 25, 50, 75 or 100-mile rides and raise funds from personal sponsors to support their efforts. To learn more please visit www.ctchallenge.org.