

Enthusiastic cyclists tackle 85-mile Sunrise Trail for Downeast Health Services

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Here's a tip of the cyclist's helmet to Dave Norwood of Ellsworth and every other hale, hearty and determined soul who will be joining him Saturday, June 4, on the 85 miles of the Sunrise Trail from Washington Junction in Hancock to Ayers Junction in Pembroke to raise funds for Downeast Health Services.

Dave is just one of the many people who will participate in this event known as Folks on Spokes that supports the work of the organization serving residents of Hancock and Washington counties through its offices in Ellsworth, Calais and Machias.

Downeast Health executive director and Dave's wife, Kathie Norwood, told me that this is the first year this fundraiser has been on this trail and that while her husband has completed all 85 miles of it, in segments, this will be his first, full-through ride.

"We've got about three or four confirmed for the 85 miles," she said, while adding that many people have registered, or indicated they will be participating in, the shorter rides of 20- and 50-mile loop rides.

And runners and walkers will do their part by participating in 5-kilometer and 10-kilometer events, all to support the work of Downeast Health's public health outreach programs in the two counties.

For complete information, including registration options, fundraising minimums for each event, start times and locations, visit <http://downeasthealth.org>, go to the right and click on Down East Folks on Spokes, email info@downeasthealth.org, call 667-5304 or 800-492-5550.

But, to fully appreciate the effort Dave and his fellow riders are putting in, you need to go to the website and, after clicking on Folks on Spokes, scroll down to the bottom of the page and click on Down East Sunrise Trail, where you will find the map of the route Dave and the other riders will cover. You will be impressed.

Of course, to make this ride, Dave and his fellow cyclists will have to be transported to the starting point from Ellsworth and, Kathie told me, that is a two-hour trip in itself, so they depart at 6 a.m. Saturday for their planned 8 a.m. start.

And, when I asked her when they expect to finish, she informed me it would be anywhere from seven to nine hours later. That's a lot of cycling in one day.

"They're pretty prepared and pretty strong," she said, adding that many who are doing the longer rides "find it is good training for the Trek Across Maine."

Kathie also told me that while she had not been on a bicycle for a few years, she did take to the trail recently and found it quite comfortable.

And there will be people out and about on all three courses to take care of any needs that may arise.

“We’ve had tremendous support from the local ATV [all-terrain vehicle] community,” Kathie said of volunteers who will be looking out for everyone’s best interests, and Kathie is very happy the weather forecast is a bit better than what riders dealt with last year when everyone rode in “absolute, pouring rain,” she said.

In its brief history (this is the fourth year) the event has raised \$22,000 and the goal for this year is an impressive \$15,000.

Another segment of this fundraiser, Down East Little Folks on Spokes, was successfully conducted in May at Ellsworth Middle-Elementary School, with more than 200 parents and kids in attendance.

That event, Kathie explained, offered an obstacle course, bike safety checks and instructions on everything from starting and stopping to how to yield.

When Downeast Health was searching for a fundraiser to help with its expenses Kathie said “as a public health organization, we wanted to find an event that really promoted the health of people” of all ages, and find “one event that would connect the two counties we serve.”

Cycling the Down East Sunrise Trail, along with the 5k and 10k walks and the bicycle fair for youngsters is accomplishing just that.

And, if you are out of town that day or otherwise unable to participate, you do have another option.

You can join as a “virtual participant” by going to the website, clicking on the registration form and selecting the virtual rider option.

For a \$50 donation you will receive a free T-shirt and gain the satisfaction of knowing you helped support Downeast Health’s work in Hancock and Washington counties.

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