

THE WAYLAND TOWN CRIER



Myke Farricker of Wayland, Paul Tamburello of Watertown and Steve Austin of Framingham are planning this year's bike ride to raise money to fight Lou Gehrig's disease. (Photo by Alex Bianchi.)

By Susan L. Sherwood/ Staff Writer
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Amyotrophic lateral sclerosis (ALS), better known as Lou Gehrig's disease, is a progressively crippling and eventually fatal neuromuscular condition.

Once diagnosed, a victim faces but one outcome - total loss of muscle control while the mind stays completely intact, and an agonizing death by gradual suffocation.

Wayland's Myke Farricker, Watertown's Paul Tamburello and Framingham's Steve Austin have all been affected in different ways by ALS.

Farricker's brother Pete succumbed to the disease in 2001 at the age of 45; Tamburello had symptoms very similar to those of ALS, but was later diagnosed with spinal muscular atrophy, a non-fatal muscular disorder; and two years ago, Austin lost a close friend, George Soerheide, who died after a five-year battle with the condition.

Today, the three men are the co-chairmen of the ALS Association, Massachusetts Chapter's annual cycling event and fundraiser, Positive Spin for ALS, which will start and end this year at the Longfellow Club on Route 20 in Wayland near the Sudbury border on Sunday, May 18.

Fight Lou Gehrig's Disease ***Bike ride raises money for ALS research***

Positive Spin consists of four concurrent bike rides - 10, 25, 50 and 100 miles - each named in honor of a local person stricken with ALS. All rides begin at the Longfellow Club.

Money raised through the event will support services for more than 200 local patients and families living with the disease, as well as national research projects aimed at unlocking the secrets of the disorder.

This is the third year that Longfellow will host a ride for ALS. In 2001, Farricker, one of the club's co-owners, joined forces with Austin, who was working at Longfellow at the time, to create a fundraiser to honor loved ones with ALS.

Farricker rode in memory of his brother, a once-active sportsman and writer for *Golf Digest Magazine*. "Originally, I thought I would be riding in Pete's honor," Farricker said. "But by the time of the event, I was riding in his Memory. Needless to say, it was a very emotional day for me."

At the same time, Tamburello was organizing his own 86-mile solo ride for the seventh consecutive year. Farricker read an article about it, remembered that he had met Tamburello at a personal growth seminar in 1978, and called to contribute. Ultimately, the three men decided to join forces in 2002.

Positive Spin for ALS, the trademarked name of Tamburello's ride, was retained for the combined event.

"It was a name that had had a track record and recognition since 1995, the year of my first fundraising ride," Tamburello said.

This year, novices can join the 10-mile loop along the back roads of Sudbury. Called George's Ride after George Soerheide of Ashland, the course meanders along scenic Water Row in Sudbury and through back roads and conservation lands. All riders must be at least 12 years of age to participate in this ride and riders under the age of 16 must be accompanied by an adult on the same route.

More experienced bikers looking for a longer, leisurely ride can participate in Pete's Ride,

named for Pete Farricker. This is a 25-mile loop through the back roads of Wayland and Sudbury.

For the touring enthusiast, Positive Spin also includes Ken's Ride, named for Ken Melansco who is now battling ALS. Ken's Ride is a 50-mile loop that explores Hudson, Bolton and Acton returns through historic Concord. This ride features rolling hills and breathtaking landscapes dotted with rustic farms and orchards.

All riders must be at least 16 years old to ride course.

Finally, experts will appreciate the challenge the 100-mile long Scott's Ride named for Scott Carlson, a New Englander who, up to late 1990s, competed in triathlons and competitive surfing tournaments around the world. Carlson was diagnosed with ALS in 1999 and today is bound to a motorized wheelchair.

Scott's Ride heads west to Princeton, and includes the summit road at Mount Wachusett before winding back through Acton and Concord.

"Positive Spin is a little unusual in that we do require participants to raise money," Tamburello says. "But since this is a disease with a face a name and as this is a fundraiser with a deep purpose, we are extremely grateful to people do support the event monetarily."

Aside from Austin, Farricker and Tamburello, members of this year's planning committee include Dan and Judy Clawson of Sudbury, Deborah Duncombe of Waltham, Chris Joy of Methuen, Denise Nolan of Cambridge and Barbara Soerheide of Ashland.

Last year's event attracted 300 riders and raised more than \$121,000. This year, the organizers hope to surpass both of these figures.

For more information about Positive Spin, to up or to volunteer for various tasks before, during and after the ride, contact the ALS Association Massachusetts Chapter, by phone at 781-328-8884, by mail at 75 McNeil Way, Suite 201, Dedham MA 02026, or online at www.positivespinforals.org.