

## LOCAL NEWS

# Couple gives to charitable causes while cycling together

By James Farrell

SUN STAFF REPORTER

When Mark and Tamara Manly were dating, they enjoyed spending their time together riding bikes.

Their interest in cycling got put on the backburner as they built their life together, getting married and having three children who would go on to give them three grandchildren.

But three years ago, Mark and Tamara – now 68 and 61, respectively – said they decided to pick up the old hobby.

“My husband dragged our bikes out of the shed about that long ago and said we either have to use them or we should sell them,” Tamara said. “So, we got on them and started pedaling, and it was really enjoyable and it was something that we could do together. We like doing things together.”

Now the Orchard Park couple starts out each week day with a 5 a.m. bike ride, Mark going 14 miles and Tamara going 20. Over the last three years, they’ve started to participate in a variety of different cycling events. And this year, they’ve made an effort to use their cycling to contribute to a good cause.

Throughout June, Mark and Tamara have represented two of more than 80,000 riders from across the country participating in the Great Cycle Challenge, an annual, month-long cycling drive that aims

to raise money for childhood cancer research.

It’s not the first time the Manlys have biked for a cause. In each of the three years of their cycling renaissance, they’ve made an effort to participate in some charitable events, like the Tour de Perry in Perry, NY, which raises money for The Arc, an organization serving developmentally disabled individuals.

But the Great Cycle Challenge’s focus on childhood cancer research inspired them to sign up this year.

“Fortunately, we don’t know any children who have suffered from childhood cancer, but we can’t imagine anything more devastating,” Mark said. “We are parents and grandparents now. So, we have a real soft spot in our hearts to help children.”

The Great Cycle Challenge invites riders from across the country to set a goal to ride a certain number of miles throughout the month of June and to raise a set amount of money over that same period. They log their miles and the donations they receive and challenge themselves to reach those goals.

This is the Challenge’s fourth year, and so far this month, a network of more than 80,000 riders have logged nearly 2.5 million miles and raised nearly \$7.5 million which serves to benefit the Childhood Cancer Research Fund.

The Manlys have contributed to that. They each set a goal of riding 250 miles and raising \$250. As of

last week, Mark has ridden 190 miles and raised \$775, while Tamara has ridden 273 miles and raised \$574.

Those miles come from the Manlys’ usual week-day rides, with additional miles logged on longer weekend rides in the hills around Orchard Park where the couple has lived for around 25 years. They are two of 12 riders from around the Buffalo area participating, Tamara said.

The couple is raising money individually, but also as a team called “Happy Ours.” Donations can be made on their web page at [www.greatcyclechallenge.com/teams/happyoours](http://www.greatcyclechallenge.com/teams/happyoours).

Mark said that the event was appealing to them from a cycling perspective because it lasted over the course of a month instead of a one-time event.

“Before, it was like go for a day, do it and it’s done. This, you have to think about it, plan for it,” Mark said. “We’ve been becoming more than casual riders. I think last year we were probably close to 1,000 miles over the summer.”

Meanwhile, they are regularly sent biographies of children who are struggling with childhood cancer and Tamara says that motivates them to keep going.

“The stories really just grip your heart and you kind of get drawn in,” she said. “The more you learn about these kids, the more you have a feeling for what their parents must be going through and for what



Contributed photo

**Mark and Tamara Manly have used their love for cycling to benefit worthwhile causes including the Great Cycle Challenge, an annual month-long cycling drive that aims to raise money for childhood cancer research.**

they themselves are going through.”

The Manlys hope to add a new charity event to their cycling routine next year. They are looking at the possibility of participating in a ride that may benefit those in

hospice care.

“My mother’s in a nursing home and my dad passed away from Alzheimer’s, so those are things that are on our minds for the elderly,” Tamara said.