

# Bicycling buddies hit the road again to make terminally ill children's wishes come true

*Cycling from Calgary to Vancouver to achieve their final goal of \$500,000 in donations*

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Long-time friends Marc Balevi and Rob Fetherstonhaugh have ridden thousands of kilometers together while raising a staggering \$420,000 for a cause very dear to their hearts. Namely, The Children's Wish Foundation, which makes dreams come true for terminally ill youngsters and which receives every cent the duo raises on their treks.

Next week, they will be back on their bikes again. Cycling from Calgary to Vancouver determined to push that total to a cool half million through their self-funded program, Canada Cycles for Kids (CCFK), that they both founded in 2001 when Balevi - who lives in Hudson - mentioned to Fetherstonhaugh, a Dorval resident, that he wanted to cycle across Canada.

Said Balevi, in an exclusive interview with *Your Local Journal* this week, "That conversation lasted through several rides and then we thought why not do such a cycle trip and make it a fundraiser. Feeling blessed with healthy children of our own, we looked for an organization that helped families who weren't as blessed and The Children's Wish Foundation was a natural pick."

*"We have decided upon one last hurrah before we get any older and wider in the saddle."*

- Cyclist Marc Balevi

Their original CCFK ride started in Vancouver on July 12, 2002 and concluded in Montreal on August 7 encompassing a total of 5,200 kms by a varied group of around 25 cyclists covering most of the trip.

Every year since then, they have continued to do much smaller rides, each time raising money for the cause. When their 10-year anniversary came around, however, personal matters



Their little poster says it all, as Rob Fetherstonhaugh and Marc Balevi set out for another ride.

PHOTO COURTESY MARC BALEVI

took precedence. Explained Balevi, "We have always regretted missing the ten year mark and so we have decided upon one last hurrah before we get any older and wider in the saddle."

them both? "I must admit," said Balevi, "that at the start we did not know that much about Children's Wish Foundation, but over the years we gained a huge appreciation for what the organization does. On our 2002 trip, we had three fundraising dinners to which we invited a 'wish family' to dine with us, as well as representatives of the foundation. The children we met were all amazing, and the devotion of the foundation was second to none. For it not only fulfills the wishes of the child who is ill, but also includes the family to join in on the adventure."

Their most poignant memory, said Balevi, was when they met a mother and father whose child had died. But that child had their wish granted and the parents recounted the joy and laughter they all experienced because of that dream fulfilled.

Unlike many fundraisers which

deduct the costs of running the event from donations collected, Balevi and Fetherstonhaugh ask those that are contributing to make their tax deductible donations directly to the Children's Wish Foundation. They themselves cover all the other costs - including travel, accommodation, fundraising dinner expenses, T shirts, banner, van rental, and website - out of their own pockets.

Donations are lump sum at the discretion of the donor and can be made via CCFK's website either by credit card - which is a link that goes to Children's Wish Foundation - or by downloading a form to fill out and mail to CCFK with a cheque - made out to The Children's Wish Foundation of Canada - that they will redirect to the foundation. The link to the donation page of their website is <http://canadacyclesforkids.com/Donate.html>