

# Riding for those who can't

## Palmyra bicyclist uses passion for cycling to help others

When Tom Garrett clips into his pedals on Nov. 22 for his 109-mile bike ride around Tuscon, Arizona, he won't be riding alone. Not only will he be riding with thousands of other Team In Training members from around the country, but as Garrett says "riding for those who can't."

A lifelong cyclist who used to ride strictly for fun, the Palmyra resident now rides for a cure. As a member of the Leukemia and Lymphoma Society's Team In Training program, he is using his passion for cycling to now help others. Team In Training (TNT) is the world's largest sports endurance training program that is a major fund raising operation of the Society. Now in its 20th year, it has helped train more than 340,000 people to do cycling; running and triathlon events which have raised more than \$800 million for research and patient services.

Garrett serves as not only a participant with TNT, but is also a cycling coach, an active fund raiser for the Society and even gives motivational speeches when called upon.

However, he claims the title he most cherishes is that of "survivor."

In the fall of 2002, he was diagnosed with Hairy Cell Leukemia, a very rare blood cancer that strikes less than 800 people a year in this country. Hearing the words "you have cancer" was not something he ever expected to hear. However, due to his lifelong commitment to fitness, a healthy diet and excellent medical care he received from Good Samaritan Hospital, he was able to put the disease into remission. Then, he decided it was time to fight back.

"I never knew about TNT until I had a chance meeting with a representative from the Society," Garrett said. "In our discussion, I mentioned that I liked cycling. Next thing I knew, I was at a Society informational meeting at the Hershey Library and had signed up for the 2004 Lake Tahoe bike ride. I was only going to do one event, then move on with my life. But crossing that finish line in 2004 was magical. I was hooked. Just knowing we can raise \$8 million at one event and put us one step closer to a cure makes me keep coming back."

Since then, he has biked Tahoe five times, did the Seagull Century ride in Maryland and even ran the Marine Corps marathon for TNT. In that time, Garrett has personally raised over \$25,000 and hopes to eventually top the \$100,000 mark.

"It's exciting to be part of this group in that we

are changing lives and saving lives, especially the lives of children," Garrett explains. "We have participants who are survivors thanks to the research we are funding. And I've done so many fund raisers where people come up to me and thank us for all we have done for those afflicted. Seeing a young mother who has been cured of blood cancer and seeing her with her children and knowing they will have mom around for a long time makes all the training and fund raising so worthwhile."

He'd love to see more people get involved with TNT. People of all ages and fitness levels are welcome. If you have the heart and determination, TNT will give you all the necessary training to get to the finish line of your event. The coaches offer a comprehensive 14-16 week training plan for every event and train right along side you, sharing their knowledge, advice and help.

"You'll get in the best shape of your life while helping a great cause," Garrett said. "You can't beat that combination."

An added advantage, according to Garrett, is the people you meet through the Society.

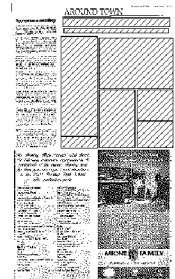
"Everyday as I read the news or see it on TV, I see the worst society has to offer," he said. "When I joined TNT, I saw the best society has to offer. These are wonderful, caring, compassionate people who are giving back to help others who have been given a bad break in life. I've made some life-long friends through all of this."

But Garrett says it isn't easy. Training can be tough and fund raising is scary to some people. But the Society, along with the coaches, mentors and other participants are always available to give helpful hints and share success stories. They even offer fund raising letter writing classes and other mini seminars on fund raising.

Fund raising is almost a year-round activity for Garrett.

"I do a couple sub sales a year that are very popular and work with Karn's Market for all my supplies," he said. "I also do a yearly bake sale and raffle at the Palmyra Wal-Mart that can generate over \$900 in sales and it gets bigger every year. Local merchants donate raffle items and family and friends provide the baked goods."

Garrett also publishes his own annual newsletter that goes out every January with his fund raising letter to sponsors. This year's newsletter was dedicated to children and featured pictures of children who have won their battle as well as blood cancer information and updates on his activities.



A long-time endurance cyclist, Garrett is a member of PowerBar Team Elite and will also be doing a five-day 428-mile trip across Nevada in September.

The Society is looking forward to Fall events where they will not only be cycling in Tucson, but doing marathons in Washington, D.C., Maryland and San Francisco, and a triathlon in Washington, D.C.

For more information or to support Garrett's journey, call him at 838-4826 or email him at [tgarrett7@MSN.com](mailto:tgarrett7@MSN.com). You can also call the Society at 652-6520 to inquire about Team In Training and how you can get involved.



Tom Garrett is busy training for two cycling events to be held in Nevada and Arizona later this year.