

The Daily Item

Local riders cycle for a cause



ITEM PHOTO / REBA M. SALDANHA

Kimberly Smith of Lynn will ride in the Great Mass Getaway this weekend.

Great Mass Getaway supports Multiple Sclerosis research

LYNNFIELD

By BRITT BRAUDO
FOR THE ITEM

When most people go on a weekend getaway, they drive to the beach or the Berkshires.

When Lynnfield resident Marshall Mazzarella goes on a weekend getaway, he cycles 150 miles down the Massachusetts shoreline to support Multiple Sclerosis research.

This morning, Mazzarella hopped on his bike to begin the Great Mass Getaway, a two-day ride from Quincy to Provincetown organized by the National Multiple Sclerosis Society's Central New England Chapter. Now in its 23rd year, the Great Mass Getaway had more than 1,300 cyclists register for the 2007 event. After riding 75 to 100 miles on Saturday, participants will spend the night at the Massachusetts Maritime Academy and arrive in Provincetown Sunday afternoon.

Mazzarella, who describes himself as an avid cyclist, is

participating in the event for the fourth time.

"I'm a weekend warrior athlete and like to challenge myself on endurance-type events and we're raising money for a great cause," Mazzarella said.

None of Mazzarella's relatives have been diagnosed with the chronic disease that damages the nervous system, but he knows of people who have it or have been affected by it.

"It's amazing to see how your body responds to the feeling of complete exhaustion that you think you'll never recover from," Mazzarella said. "Yet, you'll recover, and the people that suffer from M.S. live with that pain all the time."

Mazzarella's team, The Colonials, consists of a group of Lynnfield residents who frequent the Boston Sports Club franchise in town, which was called The Colonial Club before being bought out by BSC a few years ago. Many still refer to the club by

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its old name, providing inspiration for the team.

The Colonials ride an average of 25-30 miles each day and a 50-mile ride on Saturdays. They try to get in a follow-up ride on Sundays, usually riding every day, finding time in between for spin classes, workouts and gym time.

Although he is a hobby cyclist, when it comes to cycling for charity, the Great Mass Getaway is paramount to Mazzarella.

"I've been asked by the Alzheimer's Association, who has recently adopted a similar event to raise funds for their cause, and I should do that because my dad passed from it," Mazzarella said. "But time doesn't allow, and I'm championing the M.S. cause now. I'll try to do shorter rides because there's a

lot of smaller events around."

Lynn resident Kimberly Smith is a first-time participant in the Great Mass Getaway, but has completed the AIDS fundraising ride and various other rides, and has been a hobby cyclist since she first bought her bike in 1994.

After hearing about the event, Smith and her co-worker, Renée Mierzejewski, approached their boss at Margulies & Associates in Boston and asked if the company would be willing to sponsor them.

"The company is sponsoring us, and we've had good feedback and support from everyone," Smith said. "It seemed like a good way to get a friend to participate and be a part of a bigger group for a bigger cause."

Smith has no relatives with M.S., but said that as she's been raising funds, many have told her about family members with the disease.

"It's one of those diseases that seems to strike a lot of people," Smith said. "More and more people have been telling me about their relatives who have it."

Smith and Mierzejewski trained for the event by exploring different areas of the state and trying out different routes regularly. Smith is looking forward to meeting other cyclists at the event.

"It's really well supported, and I like the community aspect of these rides," Smith said. "Everyone comes together, and there's a positive atmosphere at the rides."

As for Mazzarella, his weekend warrior personality is shining through for the Great Mass Getaway.

"It's challenging. You push your body to a limit that's amazing," Mazzarella said. "It's a great feeling to overcome that pain, and to do it all for a great cause."