

The Great Cycle Challenge

In the summer of 2024, I had Achilles tendon issues. On the advice of Joanne Day, my natural-path doctor; Dr. Candace, my chiropractor; and the internet, I adjusted my usual activities, such as trimming the lawn and walking with my friend Nancy. Constant use of insoles for plantar fasciitis in Sketcher shoes provided support for my feet.

I could still bike and swim so when I noticed an online biking fund-raising event to fight Kids Cancer for the Sick Kids Foundation, I signed up. This ride could be scheduled anytime I rode my bike in August 2024.

I made a goal to ride 140 kilometres and pledged \$100.00. Asking for donations has always been difficult for me. When I was young, I walked Miles for Millions and asked my parents, aunts and uncles for sponsorship. Later, as a single parent, and not having money, I developed a block about sales and asking for donations. I would have loved to do the Terry Fox Runs, but couldn't ask. I gave money to my sister, Julie, when she walked in the Terry Fox run instead.

This time, with the help of technology, I could reach out more easily. I signed up on my phone and took a selfie with my bike. My favourite ride is to Blackfalds from home on the Trans Canada Trail. I planned to ride five times during August. I have a large contact list and am a member of Facebook. I sent a request to people I knew, placed the post on Facebook and hoped for the best. My two boys and brother answered right away. I raised \$250.00 which was not a large amount, but better than nothing and more than my goal. I was proud I could actually get my name out there for sponsorship.

Now I have to make sure I ride every week.

In 2001, I purchased a small trail bike. When riding my bike I carry a camel-back water pack so I don't have to stop for a drink.

I turned on the tracking App before mounting my bike on a warm August day. There was a manual setting, so I could use that if I didn't do it properly. But throughout the challenge, I wanted to make sure they knew I was actually riding the right distance.

I rode out of our driveway to the mailbox, where today of all days, a crew from the City of Lacombe was paving the street. I had to go around a large industrial area block and back in order to cross the railway tracks and streetlights on Highway #2. Then I turned west toward the Lacombe Research Station, where I worked for the summer while attending university. This is where the Trans Canada Trail access starts. The majestic trees at the research station are getting old, and many are being cut down and not replaced.

The paved trail winds through the station and then follows the highway. As I rode south I went over a wooden bridge, then eventually peddled to the dreaded hill. I could assess my level of fitness by going up this hill. I changed gears to second and first as I breathlessly reached the top. The ride down toward Lacombe Lake was the reward. The trail then went through a residential neighbourhood where I noticed a new house being built. After turning south I rode over another wooden bridge and where lilies were blooming on the lake. I had to make sure I was in the right gear to make it up the next hill and watched for e-bikes that might be coming around the corner at the top. There are trees on both sides of the road and as I rode through a park, then on to Blackfalds, met more hills, ponds, and windy paths. I rode through town to the Abbey Centre where Larry plays pickleball most mornings. I saw his truck in the parking lot. As I did the loop around the swimming pool and playground, it was time to turn back home. I tried

to do the two-hour ride without getting off my bike, but a lady with her dog was on the path as I peddled up the hill.

Now I have to push.

When I got home, I expected to have gone twenty-six kilometres, but it only showed thirteen.

Now how am I going to show the actual distance?

After fooling with the app I made sure my battery saver was not on for the next ride. I learned this from the All Trails App for hiking.

Most of my rides had inaccurate mileage. The next one was close, but still not right. On my third ride, I decided to input the distance manually and add what I missed on the first and second rides. On my last two rides, I was determined to come up with the proper distance. I had to keep making up kilometres. Finally, I started riding longer distances by riding around the grounds of the research station passing the administration building, the horticulture office, and the hog and cattle research area. When I got home I went around the block a few times.

I finally made 140 km on the app, but I rode close to 160.

I was happy I did this Ride for Cancer for the Sick Kids Foundation. It meant a lot to me. I dedicated the challenge to my sister Julie who died of pancreatic cancer when she was fifty-six. I had worked on Pediatrics so I had nursed many children battling cancer.

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