

Cancer survivor draws inspiration from Lance Armstrong

BY CORY YOUNG
World Staff Writer

The Ride For The Roses is to Tulsan Steven Bourke what the Tour De France is to world cycling champion Lance Armstrong.

Like Armstrong, Bourke is a cancer survivor focused on beating the odds.

As a member of the Lance Armstrong Foundation's Peloton Project, Bourke will ride alongside Armstrong in the Ride for the Roses bicycle ride on the weekend of Oct. 21 through Oct. 23 in Austin, Texas.

Instead of having a goal of crossing the finish line first, Bourke, 45, who started training for the ride in January, wants another outcome.

"I want this to be a victory over cancer," he said.

The bike ride began as a race between Armstrong and some of his friends years before he was diagnosed with testicular cancer.

It now serves as a fundraiser for cancer survivors.

As a Peloton Project member, he rais-

To donate on behalf of Steven Bourke, search under his last name at www.livestrong.org, where online donations will be accepted through Sept. 16. Mail-in donations will be accepted through Sept. 6.

es money for the Lance Armstrong Foundation. Money raised goes to Lance Armstrong Foundation community grant programs.

As of Aug. 22, Bourke was one of 17 Peloton Project members in Tulsa, one of 52 in Oklahoma and one of more than 4,000 worldwide.

Already raising more than \$5,000, Bourke is tops in the state, said Peloton Project Coordinator Natalie Seeboth.

In 2004, more than 7,000 Peloton Project members in 21 countries raised more than \$5.6 million for the foundation, she said.

"This year's goal is to get \$7 million to coincide with Lance's seventh Tour De France win," Seeboth said.

Bourke, whose fundraising effort

began in April, said his goal is to raise at least \$7,500 by the Sept. 6 deadline.

Bourke wants to accomplish three goals in the Peloton Project:

- to ride 100 miles in under 7 hours;
- to raise awareness for the Lance Armstrong Foundation; and
- to encourage donations of \$7,500 by Sept. 6. (If he succeeds, he'll get a green jersey and will go to a Peloton Project party during the event.)

Like Armstrong, Bourke is a champion, said Virginia Bourke, Steven's wife.

"I'm very proud of Steve," she said. "His energy for this project is wonderful to witness, and he has been an inspiration for myself and our daughters. I feel that he was able to rise above adversity and become a better person because of it."

In September 2002, Bourke was diagnosed with non-Hodgkin's lymphoma. He had gone to several doctors after noticing he was fatigued.

"I wasn't able to get my energy level up," Bourke said, "and nobody knows



CORY YOUNG / Tulsa World

Cancer survivor Steven Bourke rides three to four times a week in preparation for the upcoming Ride For The Roses.

SEE BIKE PAGE 6

FULL STORY, TEXT ONLY

The Ride For The Roses is to Tulsan Steven Bourke what the Tour De France is to world cycling champion Lance Armstrong.

Like Armstrong, Bourke is a cancer survivor focused on beating the odds.

As a member of the Lance Armstrong Foundation's Peloton Project, Bourke will ride alongside Armstrong in the Ride for the Roses bicycle ride on the weekend of Oct. 21 through Oct. 23 in Austin, Texas.

Instead of having a goal of crossing the finish line first, Bourke, 45, who started training for the ride in January, wants another outcome.

"I want this to be a victory over cancer," he said.

The bike ride began as a race between Armstrong and some of his friends years before he was diagnosed with testicular cancer.

It now serves as a fundraiser for cancer survivors.

As a Peloton Project member, he raises money for the Lance Armstrong Foundation. Money raised goes to Lance Armstrong Foundation community grant programs.

As of Aug. 22, Bourke was one of 17 Peloton

Project members in Tulsa, one of 52 in Oklahoma and one of more than 4,000 worldwide.

Already raising more than \$5,000, Bourke is tops in the state, said Peloton Project Coordinator Natalie Seeboth.

In 2004, more than 7,000 Peloton Project members in 21 countries raised more than \$5.6 million for the foundation, she said.

"This year's goal is to get \$7 million to coincide with Lance's seventh Tour De France win," Seeboth said.

Bourke, whose fundraising effort began in April, said his goal is to raise at least \$7,500 by the Sept. 6 deadline.

Bourke wants to accomplish three goals in the Peloton Project:

- * to ride 100 miles in under 7 hours;
- * to raise awareness for the Lance Armstrong Foundation; and
- * to encourage donations of \$7,500 by Sept. 6.

(If he succeeds, he'll get a green jersey and will go to a Peloton Project party during the event.)

Like Armstrong, Bourke is a champion, said

Virginia Bourke, Steven's wife.

"I'm very proud of Steve," she said. "His energy for this project is wonderful to witness, and he has been an inspiration for myself and our daughters. I feel that he was able to rise above adversity and become a better person because of it."

In September 2002, Bourke was diagnosed with non-Hodgkin's lymphoma. He had gone to several doctors after noticing he was fatigued.

"I wasn't able to get my energy level up," Bourke said, "and nobody knows why."

After being diagnosed, he underwent chemotherapy, two minor surgeries and a bone marrow biopsy and gave blood about 50 times.

The chemotherapy caused him to lose his hair and experience extreme bouts with nausea, fatigue and fear, he said.

"Right in that moment, your whole life changes instantly," Bourke said.

While going through chemo-therapy, Bourke read and was inspired by Armstrong's book, "It's Not About The Bike," which describes what the cyclist went through.

"Lance was given less than a 50 percent chance to live, and he still came back to be the greatest cycling champion in the world," Bourke said.

Armstrong's testicular cancer spread to his abdomen, lungs and brain.

The champion cyclist won his seventh Tour De France title in July.

"The example of Lance Armstrong taught me that you can put your dreams on hold for a while, but that you should never give up, always have hope and to fight with everything you've got," said Bourke, who had not ridden a bike since childhood.

Bourke, an information technology manager for WilTel Communications, now rides four to five times a week, covering about 125 miles a week.

"When I started, I'd be doing good if I got 10 slow miles. Now, I do 25-mile to 60-mile rides," he said. Bourke said cancer opened his eyes about life.

"That was two years ago. Ever since then, I've been a cyclist," Bourke said.