

Cycle-a-thon to fund Parkinson's research

Former 'Nole creates 'Pedaling for Parkinson's' in honor of grandfather

Feb 7, 2013

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Students cycle for a cure at Sweat Therapy Fitness during the 2011 Pedaling for Parkinson's fundraiser. / Photo courtesy of Paulie Bruns

When Jilliane Grayson lost her grandfather Samuel Torres to Parkinson's Disease, she decided to do more than mourn. A second-year medical student at FSU at the time, Grayson worked with the FSU College of Medicine and came up with a fundraiser called Pedaling for Parkinson's.

The event made its debut in the fall of 2011, when it raised \$15,000 for Parkinson's research and awareness. This Saturday, Feb. 9, the event will host its second run from 10 a.m. to 2 p.m. at Sweat Therapy Fitness on Thomasville Road.

The event is an indoor cycle-a-thon asking teams comprised of undergraduate clubs and community members to take turns riding an exercise bike for four straight hours. Each team, who was asked to raise as much money as they could in support of the cause, will be in charge of one bike and members will alternate to keep the bike in constant use.

Some bikes will be reserved for walk-ins, who will be able to ride based on suggested donations of \$5 for 15 minutes, \$10 for 30 minutes, and so on. There will also be a bike reserved for Parkinson's patients. To keep morale high, a DJ will be playing throughout the four-hour ride.

Paulie Bruns, this year's event planner, wanted more community involvement in the second annual Pedaling for Parkinson's fundraiser.

"This year we're trying to incorporate more parts of the community," Bruns said. "We wanted to expand on the idea of bringing awareness to people here in Tallahassee about Parkinson's."

To help with that goal, the National Parkinson's Foundation will have an information table for community awareness and provision of resources in the breezeway of the Manor @ Midtown complex where Sweat Therapy Fitness is located. Food will also be provided in the breezeway, and those interested can participate in a raffle there as well.

Nextdoor in 5th Avenue Tap Room, attendants can listen to a lecture series given by three notable doctors: Dr. Jacob VanLandingham, Dr. Gerry Maitland, and Dr. Charles Ouimet. Both VanLandingham and Ouimet are faculty at FSU.

The series is another way in which the event will do more reaching out to the community.

"We made the lecture series a little bit more community-based and less science-based with the idea of letting people know what the disease is, what research is being done here locally, and also what a Parkinson's patient goes through, what their needs are, what the caregiver's needs are, and what the resources are that are available in the community," Bruns said.

Judi Taber, who works for Tallahassee Memorial HealthCare and worked closely with the College of Medicine students in preparation of both events, thinks the series has a lot of benefits.

"It's really good for community awareness, to get the word out there about Parkinson's, and if there are individuals in the community who have recently been diagnosed, it would be a good event to attend to listen to the lecture series and what kind of research they're coming up with," Taber said.

The research is a vital part of it all, according to Bruns.

"The research that's being done is all based on clinical studies, and it's all non-pharmaceutical ways to help Parkinson's patients improve and that sort of research is very hard to get funding for because most of the clinical research is based on pharmaceuticals and there's no real money to be made in physical techniques," Bruns said.

Taber is proud of the work that has gone into the event and the community spirit it embodies.

"It provides a wonderful way to provide information to individuals in the community who are diagnosed with Parkinson's, particularly newly diagnosed Parkinson's patients, and also it provides an opportunity for College of Medicine students to be out there helping support those individuals who are diagnosed with Parkinson's," Taber said. "They are very enthusiastic and they are wonderful students to work with."

The proceeds will benefit the Tallahassee Memorial NeuroScience Center for Parkinson's Research through the TMH Foundation, thanks to the partnership of Sweat Therapy Fitness, the FSU College of Medicine and the Terner Family Foundation who made the fundraiser a reality.

Pedaling for Parkinson's is always held in memory of Grayson's grandfather, Samuel Torres.