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[Howells pedal to raise funds for kidney disease](#)

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- On the road: Charlie and Elaine Howell enjoyed the scenery as they rode bikes for 200 miles to raise money for the Kidney TRUST.



Diane Raver [The Herald-Tribune](#)

-- — After training for several months, a Batesville couple participated in a three-day bike ride to raise money for charity.

From Sept. 18-21, Charlie and Elaine Howell rode 200 miles when they joined over 400 others in the fifth annual Tour DaVita in an effort to raise awareness and funds to fight kidney disease.

“This was something my company sponsors, and I always wanted to do it,” reports Elaine Howell, a DaVita renal dietitian who works at Batesville and surrounding areas.

“Charlie was my training partner.” Starting in April, “we did a lot of bike rides through Franklin and Ripley counties, out through the cornfields.”

The ride kicked off in Great Barrington, Mass., and continued south into Connecticut. “The hills were tough,” Charlie announces. They also had to get used to camping each night in rather chilly temperatures. “The first few hours were cold.”

However, Elaine points out, “It was a great atmosphere. Everybody just supported everybody else, and there was great camaraderie among the riders.” And the scenery was beautiful, her husband adds.

Despite the challenges, they have great memories from the adventure, including having lunch on the grounds of the Norman Rockwell Museum, Stockbridge, Mass.

Each night, a program was held in a tent, where participants could talk about their day. There were also opportunities for kidney testing and information on kidney awareness was available.

Organizers also talked about “the spirit of the ride and doing your personal best. It was really neat because we were all united for the common cause of fighting kidney disease,” she says.

“I’ve worked in dialysis for a long time and see what the patients need to do. It’s a tough thing to have to be on dialysis.”

Charlie Howell, a Hill-Rom Holdings engineer, notes, “If you catch it (the disease) in time, you can delay the progression and can take measures to keep it from getting worse. That’s what this whole awareness is about.”

The Howells, who have two children, Sarah, 22, and Michael, 19, are considering participating in the event in the future, possibly next year when it takes place in Colorado.

In 2011, Tour DaVita raised \$700,000 for the Kidney TRUST, a nonprofit that focuses on increasing awareness of chronic kidney disease through public education and early-detection testing programs.