



Dialysis Patients Gear Up for “Ride of a Lifetime”

By Bianca Violante

DaVita kicks off its sixth annual **Tour DaVita** this weekend in eastern Iowa, where nearly 500 riders, including DaVita teammates, physicians, family and friends, from across the country will travel to Iowa to participate in this “Ride of a Lifetime.” The three-day, 250-mile bike ride aims to raise funds and awareness in the fight against kidney disease. This year, six dialysis patients will be among the riders.

“This will be my fourth straight Tour DaVita because, quite simply, it’s fun, it’s a great way to challenge yourself and stay fit, and because of the inspirational stories of those who ride,” said Jim Greenwood, divisional vice president for DaVita. “In my opinion, none are more inspirational than the patients—and there are six in this year’s tour—who will tackle 250 miles in three days, all while undergoing life-sustaining dialysis treatments at some point during Tour DaVita. Knowing they are out there on the ride gives me a boost to get through each day.”

Meet the Patients

Alphonso Jefferson received his college degree in psychology while on dialysis in 2003. A home hemodialysis (HHD) patient, Alphonso has been training with his DaVita home nurse, Mandy Votaw, over the last few months in his hometown of Virginia Beach, Va.

While at Tour DaVita, Alphonso will continue using a NxStage home dialysis machine for his treatments while traveling across the state of Iowa during Tour DaVita.

Bill Porter has always been an avid cyclist, completing multiple century rides through the Rocky Mountains in his younger years. He now resides outside of Houston, Texas and at age 73 has got back on the saddle for the first time in 20 years to train for Tour DaVita with the help of his local care team, Yolanda Sicam and Soudie Erfanfar, who will also join him in Iowa.

Central Ohio native Mark Richardson is back for his second Tour DaVita, which he says is one of the best things he’s ever done in his life. Before going on dialysis in 2009, Mark was an avid cyclist. He describes his early experiences with dialysis as “crippling,” but credits Tour DaVita with giving him a new, positive outlook on life.

Matthew Purvis of Pensacola, Fla. is no stranger to long bike rides; in fact, this year will be his third Tour DaVita. He was the first-ever Tour DaVita patient rider in 2010. Matthew has experienced kidney disease his whole life and received his first kidney transplant when he was 6-years old from his father. In 2006, that kidney failed and Matthew started dialysis with DaVita.

Despite having his kidney transplant fail after 11 years, Mike Walker stays positive about the dialysis treatments he’s been receiving for the past four years. He cycles daily and cruises around the San Francisco Bay Area on his motorcycle. Mike’s doctor supported his participation in Tour DaVita and recommended that he train with his local care team, who will join him in Iowa.

Thomas Holmes grew up a “jock,” playing football in his youth and running marathons as an adult in and around Detroit. He attributes his ability to remain active partly to the fact that he does home dialysis with the help of his NxStage System One machine and his DaVita nurses. After Tour DaVita he plans on pursuing another marathon—his first since starting dialysis two and a half years ago.

Fundraising Efforts

The beneficiary for the 2012 **Tour DaVita is Bridge of Life—DaVita Medical Missions**, an independent nonprofit organization committed to helping improve kidney health and save lives by bringing treatment, education and hope to underserved communities around the world.

“For every four miles ridden, Bridge of Life will be able to provide a life-sustaining dialysis treatment at one of its partnering clinics around the world,” said Lori Vaclavik, executive director of Bridge of Life—DaVita Medical Missions. “With the funds raised by Tour DaVita participants and sponsors, we will be able complete six more medical missions and install or replace nearly 80 dialysis machines, giving access to life-saving dialysis to 430 more people.”

Since Tour DaVita started in 2007 it has raised more than \$3 million dollars to help increase awareness in the fight against kidney disease.

For more information about the sixth annual Tour DaVita, please visit <http://www.tourdavita.org>. For more information about Bridge of Life—DaVita Medical Missions, please visit <http://www.bridgeoflifemm.org>.

###