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Hundreds of Cyclists Pass Through City, Final Leg of 240-Mile Ride

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Middletown's Main Street at Dr. Martin Luther King Drive today was filled with red T-shirted Davita Dialysis employees clanging cow bells and whooping it up in support of bicyclists braving the rain and slick conditions — nearing the end of a two-day 240-mile ride.

The fifth annual Tour Davita began Sunday in Great Barrington, Mass., and follows the Connecticut River through to the shoreline. Today's ride is a 60-mile one from Simsbury to Hammonasset Beach in Madison, where it ends tonight.

Cyclists saw Avon, Farmington, Plainville, Southington, Berlin, Middletown, Durham, Killingworth and more today. Word is, because of the wet roads, four riders were injured. But that didn't stop the more than 400 folks raising money for the Kidney TRUST.

The Trust aims to benefit the 31 million American adults living with chronic kidney disease, as well as the 506,000 Americans with kidney failure who require dialysis or a kidney transplant.

Bicyclists are sponsored, says Tammy Bonet, RN, CDN, Davita regional operations director — and each raised "between \$700 and \$2,000 per rider."

Teammates, as employees at DaVita Middlesex Dialysis Center are called, riders and members of the public are offered "an early kidney screening to see if they have any of the markers that would lead to kidney failure," Bonet says.

The rapid response blood test assesses kidney disease risk. State Rep. Matt Lesser, D-Middlefield, Middletown and Durham, saw the crowd, stopped by and had his creatinine level checked — a test that determines how well the kidneys are removing waste products in the blood.

Lesser assures us he passed with flying colors — as did Middletown Patch.

One of today's technicians drawing blood said in the first day of the ride, 15 people were identified as at risk of kidney disease. "They get a little bit of onsite education as well," Bonet says.

Cyclists ride bet 60 and 100 miles a day. "We have teammates riding, we have physicians riding, we have our CEO, we have our VP — everybody's involved," Bonet explained.

Although the ride is two days, it's not constant. "We have what we call at tent city every night. Every night they tent up in a certain area," Bonet explains. "Backroads [Bicycle Tours] takes care of moving everything for us," like the bicycles, tents, tables and food, and riders "visit one or two clinics on the ride, they go on a tour, meet the patients and explain with they're doing."