

AFTERTHOUGHTS

Compiled by Rebecca Zumoff

Pedaling to help others

More than 400 DaVita Inc. employees, family members, and friends from around the country met in Great Barrington, Mass., Sept. 17 to start the 5th annual, 250-mile Tour DaVita. This year the tour raised money for The Kidney TRUST, a nonprofit organization with the mission to reduce the human and economic cost of chronic kidney disease across the United States.

DaVita volunteers participated in more than a dozen community service projects in Great Barrington as part of the tour kick-off, including completing the remodeling of the Railroad Street Youth Project Drop-In Center. DaVita donated \$25,000 to the youth organization and K.T. Community Foundation, a foundation started by DaVita Chairman and CEO Kent Thiry and his wife, Denise O'Leary, also donated \$25,000.

"Tour DaVita isn't a bike race, but rather a collection of like-minded people from across the country cycling together to spread awareness of a disease that affects one



Tour DaVita participants ride on a rainy day

out of six adult Americans," said Thiry, who participated in the ride. "I have ridden in Tour DaVita every year to date because this is too important of an event, and frankly, too much fun, to not participate." Riders have to raise a minimum of \$750 in donations and pay their own travel expenses. Their individual fundraising combined with donations from DaVita and other corporate sponsorship is expected to contribute more than \$700,000 to The Kidney TRUST.

American Kidney Fund steps up prevention efforts

The American Kidney Fund hosted Kidney Action Day on Oct. 1 in San Antonio, featuring the Steps That Count walkathon. The event raised funds for programs and services to help patients affected by kidney disease. Kidney Action Day also featured free health screenings, healthy food samples, cooking and exercise demonstrations, and other family-friendly activities to increase awareness of kidney disease. At the free health screenings, volunteers checked indicators of kidney and heart health, diabetes, and other important health measures.



"Pairing up with communities across the nation to raise awareness of kidney disease and its leading causes, diabetes and high blood pressure, is a critical part of the mission of the American Kidney Fund; especially in communities like San Antonio where the number of people living with kidney disease is two times higher than the national average," said LaVarne A. Burton, president and CEO of the AKF.

Surgeon goes under the knife for a stranger

Orthopedic surgeon Jim Haemmerle will represent living organ donors when he rides on the Donate Life "One More Day" float at the 123rd Annual Rose Parade in Pasadena, Calif., on Jan. 2, 2012.

A Mayo Clinic Health System physician from Menomonie, Wis., Haemmerle donated a kidney to a stranger in 2010. "It just felt like the right thing to do for a fellow human being," he said. "I'm grateful that my family and I have been blessed with generally good health. Perhaps this was a way to express that gratitude."

The Donate Life float's riders and floragraph honorees represent millions of people touched by organ and tissue donation. Riders must have a personal connection to donation as the family member of a deceased organ, eye or tissue donor; a living organ donor; or a recipient of an organ, tissue or cornea transplant.

"I've gained much more from the experience than I've given," he said. "I'm aware every day that life is a precious gift, and I'm grateful for my health, my family and all of the opportunities life offers. I hope I have many more years of good health, and I hope my left kidney will outlive me." *NN&I*