

Team Fauquier Looking for New Cyclists for Tour de Cure to Fight Diabetes

For someone who was diagnosed with diabetes last spring, Tom VandenBosche is a pretty happy guy. That's because after turning around his diet and exercise routine, he's also turned around his health numbers. In the summer of 2011, his A1C number (a measurement of a person's average blood glucose level over a two to three-month period) was 6.2 and he was told he was pre-diabetic. By April, his A1C had climbed to 7.0, solidly in the diabetic range. "When my numbers showed I was pre-diabetic, my doctor would shake his finger at me and tell me to lose weight and start exercising... but I didn't. Then when I was diagnosed with diabetes, I became depressed; when I looked ahead, I saw the serious complications that come with diabetes."



Cyclist and personal trainer, Al Maxey (left), has helped Tom VandenBosche (right) lower his A1C numbers.

But VandenBosche decided to rewrite the ending to that story. With the help of cyclist and personal trainer Al Maxey and the Fauquier Health Wellness Center, VandenBosche's last blood test showed his A1C had dropped to 5.4, out of the diabetic danger zone. "Last year at this time I was 56 years old and felt 60. Now I'm 57 and feel like I'm 45. I'm one year older and 15 years healthier."

VandenBosche said that he had insisted for a long time that he didn't have time to exercise. With a three- to four-hour commute, he would come home exhausted and didn't want to move. He began training seriously in November with Al Maxey and Team Fauquier for the 108-mile Tour de Cure bike tour, and soon found he had energy to spare. Now, he says, he hates to miss a day.

The June 2 Tour de Cure is a fundraiser for the American Diabetes Association. VandenBosche said, "The folks at the Wellness Center gave me the tools I needed and Al gave me the focus." He met with diabetes educators and a registered dietitian to revamp his diet and exercise habits.

Recognizing that diabetes is reaching epidemic proportions in this area and throughout the country, Fauquier Health Wellness Center offers a full complement of diabetes experts and services: two diabetes/nutrition educators, a diabetes-certified nurse, an insulin pump instructor, diabetes support group and exercise options and guidance for diabetics. Classes for those with pre-diabetes are now offered throughout the year.

Al Maxey, who is riding in the Tour de Cure for the third time, is Team Fauquier's leader and enthusiastic supporter. He is a systems analyst at Fauquier Health and also is a certified personal

trainer at the Wellness Center. Three years ago, Maxey was faced with a pre-diabetic diagnosis himself. He said, “The Tour de Cure was the event I used to turn my own health around. The whole experience was miraculous – a life changer. It means a lot to be able to help others change their lives too.”

Maxey trains his fellow cyclists free of charge. Fauquier Health supports the team by donating training time in the Wellness Center’s cycling studio. Team Fauquier trains four nights a week at the Wellness Center, and Maxey is looking to possibly add a Saturday session as well. Team members sometimes ride outside in groups on the weekend, and Maxey expects outside work to expand as the weather improves.

He says as little as three months can be enough time to train for the 108-mile ride, so there is still plenty of time to join the group, which currently has about 26 members. He’d like to have 40 for the ride – that would double the number on last year’s team. Not everyone will choose the full 108-mile route come June. There are 14-, 20-, 35-, 56- and 82-mile routes as well. (VandenBosche said that for those who choose a shorter route, two months is probably enough of a training window.)

Last year’s Team Fauquier raised \$6,303 for the American Diabetes Association; this year Maxey would like to top \$10,000. Each team member is responsible for raising at least \$250, but VandenBosche has proven to be a bit of an over-achiever. He has already raised \$1,600 and earned the title of fundraising “champion.” “I just ask everybody I know to donate,” he said. “Some friends have donated up to \$250, but the small donations really add up quickly. It hasn’t been hard at all to raise \$1,600. I just keep asking.”

Tour de Cure 2012, said Maxey, “was a big party with a bike ride in the middle. There were crowds of people cheering, and at the end there was a big party with live entertainment. It’s a really well-run event, and can accommodate experienced cyclists as well as people who haven’t been on a bike for years. Last year, we had one guy who hadn’t ridden since grade school. He rode the full, 108-mile route.”

The Tour de Cure is a fully supported ride, providing food, drinks and first aid at all of the rest stops. Anyone who would like to join the team may call Maxey at 540-316-5520 for more information. Team Fauquier also has its own website, where those interested can sign up for the team or donate to the cause: <http://main.diabetes.org/goto/teamfauquier>. Team Fauquier also has its own Facebook page at <https://www.facebook.com/TeamFauquier>.