



“OVERCOMING CHALLENGES: VISUALLY IMPAIRED RIDER SETS HIS SIGHTS ON CHANGING LIVES”

Toronto – More than 300 cyclists and volunteers will take to the road on July 26, 2009 in support of the Toronto People with AIDS Foundation (PWA) on a six day, 600 km bike ride between Toronto and Montreal. Last year the *Friends for Life Bike Rally* raised over a million dollars.

Michael Ovens, a blind rider, and his partner Sheldon Kennedy, will be making the journey to Montreal in tandem this year. Michael began losing his vision in grade 6 and over time it got worse. Now legally blind, the only way Michael could ride was by having a pilot and riding on a tandem bike. Michael says “I feel that I need to constantly challenge myself because at the end of the day I want to feel like I have accomplished something and contributed in a positive way to make a difference.”

Sheldon had to learn how to pilot a tandem, no easy task according to Sheldon, especially when your partner is the “back seat driver”. After Michael completed the ride last year with a friend, Sheldon said, “I knew that I wanted to be a part of this event because it raises funds and awareness for a great organization, plus I wanted to share this incredible experience with my partner.”

Todd Ross, Co-Chair of this year’s Bike Rally, says “Mike and Sheldon are excellent ambassadors for the Bike Rally; they personify the dedication and commitment it takes to overcome life’s challenges. With the funds that Mike and Sheldon raise through the Friends For Life Bike Rally the PWA can help people overcome some of the challenges of living with HIV/AIDS.”

For more information about the Friends for Life Bike Rally in support of Toronto People with AIDS, please visit www.bikerally.org.

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To contact Michael Ovens call 647-866-5600
To contact Sheldon Kennedy call 416-910-5042

Spokespeople are available to talk about the event, as well as broader HIV/AIDS issues.

For further information: Pam Beavis, Toronto People With AIDS Foundation, (416) 506-8606 ext. 240 or www.bikerally.org; or Todd Ross, Bike Rally Co-Chair, (416) 505-4740 or cochairs@bikerally.org.

About the Toronto People With AIDS Foundation

The Toronto People With AIDS Foundation exists to promote the health and well-being of all people living with HIV/AIDS by providing accessible, direct, and practical support services. It is Canada’s largest direct support service agency for people living with HIV/AIDS. For more information, please visit: www.pwatoronto.org