



THE HEART OF THE MATTER – HEART SURGERY SURVIVOR RIDES 600KM IN CYCLING CHALLENGE

Toronto - Hundreds of 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 and this year they hope to exceed that amount.

First-time rider, David Wood, who will turn 70 before he begins the ride to Montreal. He doesn't shy away from talking about the personal health challenge that compelled him to get on his bike: "I had a quadruple by-pass surgery four years ago and I want to show my friends, family, and other heart surgery patients that there is life after a heart operation. I have been training for months now – sometimes in the rain – and know I'm going to be ready for the six day journey at the end of July." This ride is more than a personal challenge for David, he does it as a homage to a vast number of friends that he has lost to AIDS and "in honour and support of PWA who helped support friends here and gone."

"As long as there's a reason, there's a ride," said Todd Ross, co-chair of the event. "Eleven years after the rally was born, people living with HIV/AIDS in our community still need support. As long as they do, we will keep riding." The Friends for Life Bike Rally is a grassroots, volunteer-driven fundraiser that began in 1998 when two friends challenged each other to cycle from Toronto to Montreal to support PWA. Today it has become a personal challenge for each rider who is determined to change not only their own lives, but the lives of a community.

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

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To contact David Wood call (416) 708-1036.

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