

They Trained, They Rode, They Conquered

By Pamela Lewis, Public Affairs

Shall I breathe or take a drink of water? This was just one of the challenges faced by a first-time rider in the MS 150 bike ride, as she conquered the hilly countryside between Houston and Austin.

A number of faculty, staff and students from the UT Health Science Center and some of their relatives were members of Team UT who took part in several ways during the annual MS 150, in late April, to raise funds to combat multiple sclerosis. Team UT is made up of riders from the health science center, from UT M. D. Anderson Cancer Center and from UT Medical Branch at Galveston. Offered below are verbal snapshots of how two staff members and one faculty member, along with the son of one of the staff members, trained, rode and conquered the 150-plus miles from Houston to Austin.

Sondra K. Faul, from Environmental Health and Safety, and **her 14-year-old son, Joseph**, rode for the first time this year. "We started out riding in our neighborhood, then moved up to a regular 40-mile route which we tried to ride every weekend. Some weekends we rode 40 on Saturday and then 20 on Sunday," Sondra Faul explained.

They also participated in several of the "official" MS training rides. "Prior to the actual MS 150, the most we had ridden was 60 miles in one day. We attended a safety training class that the MS Society sponsored and we also attended a meeting that was specifically for kids my son's age."

Joseph, she said, is in pretty good shape and,

of course, "he had the youth factor on his side." And, although Sondra is in pretty good shape from exercising and snow skiing, "at the age of 45, I had to step up my workout routine a lot. I started working out on the stair stepper and stationary bike for 90 minutes twice a week. I also included weight lifting. I asked a lot of questions to make sure I was doing what I needed to do so that we did not get injured. Joseph and I both increased our water intake tremendously in the week prior to the ride."

What was Sondra's worst moment on the ride? "When I was trying to decide if I should breathe or take a drink of water. The second half of the first day was very, very difficult for me. It was very hot and lots of hills. I had to stay focused and remember to breathe."

And, their best moment? "When we crossed the finish line in Austin. Wow, it's really hard to describe. We set a goal and accomplished it. We met the physical goal of finishing and we met the financial goal that is required by MS. Through the generous donations of family and friends we each raised more than what MS



Dean George Stancel, Ph.D.

requires. Actually Shannon Prater in Human Resources took her lunch time to help raise money for Joseph. She raised \$200. This was another way my son could see the generosity of people."

Sondra Faul said she and Joseph did the ride for a number of reasons. "I know several people with MS so I wanted to help raise funds for a worthy cause. As the mother of a 14-year-old, I am trying to teach him about giving back to society and to appreciate the blessings that he has received. He is a healthy young man and there are a lot of people out there who are not. Over the past several years Joseph and I have been involved in several different activities: The American Heart Walk, we are both volunteers at the Gulf Coast Blood Center and I am a Committed for Life member (which means I give blood once a quarter). Joseph is ready to give blood as soon as he is old enough. We are both volunteers at KSBH radio station and Joseph wants to volunteer this summer at the Rec Center Summer Camp. All of these activities have made my son see his blessings and also see that he can give to the community in many ways."

Will they ride again next year? "Definitely!" said Sondra Faul. "We are going to continue to ride during the year so that we don't have to start from scratch. We want to raise more funds and go just a little faster."

Catharine "Catey" Carter, Office of *continued on page 2*



Sondra Faul, right, and son, Joseph, first-time riders. Photo by Pauline Habetz.

Bird Flu – Who's Tracking It at the HSC and How Should We Prepare?

By Pamela Lewis, Public Affairs

If you've been reading or listening to the mass media, you may be confused about how big an issue avian flu (commonly known as bird flu) really is.

At the most recent Leadership Forum, Bruce Brown, director of Environmental Health and Safety, reported on bird flu and

how the UT Health Science Center is preparing for the possibility of an avian flu pandemic. Brown is a member of the university's Pandemic Flu Task Force, created by Mike McKinney, M.D., senior executive vice president and chief operating officer. Its specific charge is to look at the health science center's

Emergency Situation Response Plan and identify any gaps for responding to a pandemic flu outbreak.

The task force is co-chaired by Mary desVignes-Kendrick, M.D., who served as director of the City of Houston Department of Health and Human Services for 12 years, and is now professor of Management Policy and Community Health, School of Public Health, and Luis Ostrosky-Zeichner, M.D., assistant professor, department of Internal Medicine, Medical School.

The problem with planning for an avian flu pandemic is that we are looking at something that may or may not happen. That means there are plenty of differences of opinion out there, in addition to information available through mass media that is often contradictory, with one story downplaying the possibility, while another reads as if we will all be quarantined, extremely sick or dead if one sick bird lands on our shores.

"Avian flu is very scary to many people, and this fear might lead to even higher levels of 'confusion' of the issues being brought out

by the media," said desVignes-Kendrick. In addition, a bird flu movie, "Fatal Contact: Bird Flu in America," aired on Tuesday, May 9, on ABC, "and this may certainly fuel the fire," she added.

However, a lot of people on international, national, state and local levels have been working hard to provide credible information that seeks to clarify or decrease the confusion, said desVignes-Kendrick. (See resource list at the end of this article.)

A local example of helping provide credible information, the UT Center for Biosecurity and Public Health Preparedness of SPH has been providing training on pandemic flu/avian flu to health care providers and first



Bruce Brown

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WHO Phases of Pandemic Alert

Inter-pandemic phase	Low risk of human cases	1
	Higher risk of human cases	2
Pandemic alert	No or very limited human-to-human transmission	3
	Evidence of increased human-to-human transmission	4
	Evidence of significant human-to-human transmission	5
Pandemic	Efficient and sustained human-to-human transmission	6

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UT Medical School, South Texas Medical Schools Recognized for Katrina Help

The AAMC (Association of American Medical Colleges) has awarded national recognition to The University of Texas Medical School at Houston — as a member of the Alliance of South Texas Academic Health Centers — for the assistance it provided to the Tulane University School of Medicine and to the academic community at-large following the devastation wrought by Hurricane Katrina.

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