

Cyclist rolls to raise money

Cancer survivor embarks on cross-Canada odyssey for kids battling the illness

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VANCOUVER - Tim Harriman was a self-described jock from Alberta when he was diagnosed with advanced leukemia at age 14. Now 19 and free of cancer, he is using his assertiveness and athleticism to raise money and awareness for the 10,000 children across Canada who don't know if they'll survive the cancer they are battling.

After launching his coast-to-coast odyssey in Victoria Sunday, Vancouver was the second stop Monday on Harriman's 84-day cycling tour. Apart from a media conference at the H.R. MacMillan Space Centre, he dropped in on patients at BC Children's Hospital for a private pizza party so he could tell them about his mission, which is scheduled to end Aug. 24 in Newfoundland.

Harriman said he expects the cycling part of his tour will take more than 400 hours. His parents and other supporters will accompany him in a recreational vehicle stocked with bike parts. Nearly \$40,000 Cdn in donations have poured in since last week.

He said his first goal is to convince the federal government to declare every September Childhood Cancer Awareness Month, as it is in the U.S., because September is when healthy kids go back to school but cancer patients often can't because they are in and out of hospital. Having a month designated helps build awareness and donations.

Harriman said his second goal is to raise money for the Childhood Cancer Foundation, a charity that provides research funding to scientists at 17 pediatric cancer facilities, and support and advocacy for young cancer patients and their families.

Quinn Dunbar, an 11-year-old Cloverdale boy who has been battling brain cancer for five years, went to the event to present Harriman with narrated artwork he created to inspire Harriman as he cycles across the country.

"The tour is about giving kids hope and pushing for kids like Quinn whose voices need to be heard," Harriman said.

"I think he's awesome and it's really cool what he's doing because he wants to make sure that cancer kids can be like normal," said Dunbar, who has lost part of his hearing and his sight because of his cancer and treatment.

Jared Brick, a Vancouver childhood cancer survivor who who aspires to be a biochemistry cancer researcher, said he had two brain operations, 17 radiation treatments and four rounds of chemotherapy to fight the brain cancer he got in 2000 when he was 16. Now he volunteers at Children's Hospital to lend moral and emotional support to patients and their families.



CREDIT: Ian Smith, Vancouver Sun
Leukemia survivor Tim Harriman gets support from Quin Dunbar, 11, who's undergoing cancer treatment.

"Kids lose so much of their lives when they are fighting cancer and they develop their own networks to share stories to help them understand they are not alone," said Mary Lye, director of marketing and communications for the Childhood Cancer Foundation. Like Harriman, Lye's daughter won the war against her leukemia when she was 15 years old.

Suzanne Dunbar said she heard about Harriman's tour last week and was so amazed by his mission that she made sure she took her son Quinn to meet him.

"He's receiving aggressive chemotherapy now through to the fall. We went to Detroit for a special type of [targeted] radiation not available here and that shrunk the brain tumour but he's also got one on his spine," she said.

Harriman said he also received radiation treatment to lower the risk of a relapse from 30 per cent to under five per cent. After the tour, he will start college in Calgary. His career ambition is to become a youth motivational speaker.

Sun Health Issues Reporter

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TIM HARRIMAN'S SPOKEMAN TOUR

- Will take 84 days, span 7,738 kilometres
- B.C. schedule includes these routes: Langley to Hope, today; Hope to Merritt, Wednesday; Merritt to Kamloops, thursday; Kamloops to Salmon Arm, Friday; Salmon Arm to Canyon Hot Springs, Saturday; Canyon Hot Springs to Golden, Sunday; Golden to Banff, Monday.
- To make donations and sign the petition advocating September as Childhood Cancer Month, go to Harriman's tour website at www.spokemantour.com
- The Childhood Cancer Foundation can be contacted at www.childhoodcancer.ca or by calling 1-800-363-1062

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