

Mount Sinai woman on epic trek to raise money for leukemia research

By [Samantha Brix](#) | June 17, 2011 in [Featured Stories](#), [News](#)

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COURTESY PHOTO | Cindi Lattanzio of Mount Sinai will ride her bike 100 miles to Montauk this Saturday to raise money for The Leukemia and Lymphoma Society.

Cindi Lattanzio, a self-proclaimed “exercise freak,” works out almost every single day.

Lately, she’s been riding her 22-speed Trek bicycle up to 80 miles around the North Shore.

And this Saturday she’ll take off on a 100-mile indirect ride from the Long Island Rail Road station in Babylon to the Montauk Point Lighthouse. But the ride isn’t to satisfy her intense workout cravings. She’s riding with “Team in Training,” a sports charity program that raises money for The Leukemia and Lymphoma Society.

Ms. Lattanzio, a physical therapist from Mount Sinai, said she’s been involved with the foundation ever since her physical therapy mentor, Jeff, died of leukemia in 2001, just three months after she learned he was sick.

“He was the greatest physical therapist around. It was terrible,” she said. “When the opportunity for us to make a team came around, I wanted to do this in his honor.”

Ms. Lattanzio is teaming up with up to 50 people on teams from both Nassau and Suffolk counties to ride around Heckscher State Park in East Islip, from the Long Island Rail Road station in Yaphank to the Baiting Hollow area and around the hilly campus of Stony Brook University.

The bicyclists have gotten together at least once a week since March, braving the most frigid cold winter mornings and scorching hot summer afternoons to prepare for this weekend's ride.

Ms. Lattanzio has encouraged others to hop on board her team by giving free lectures on ride preparations at her business, Physical Therapy and Beyond in East Setauket. She's spoken about everything from injury prevention to proper stretching, strengthening techniques, safety precautions and advice on minor injuries, of which Ms. Lattanzio has sustained many.

She said she's hurt her knee, wrist and back numerous times since she began practicing for this Saturday's ride.

"My body has changed a lot since I was a teenager," she said with a laugh, referring to the last time she ever rode her bike excessively.

Growing up in Queens, Ms. Lattanzio rode her bike around the borough and during trips to Vermont. She once rode 365 miles from Manhattan to Montreal.

But until this year, she hadn't put foot to bike pedal since she was 23 years old. She said she's astonished herself at how many miles she can ride — she'll now ride about 85 miles during a regular practice, up from 25 when she first started training — and says the charity's cause is what fuels her drive.

Before each practice, her teammates gather in a circle to remember why they're about to sweat for the next five hours and give their calf muscles a good conditioning. They pray for people they know with leukemia who are going through treatment, or they'll remember loved ones who've lost battles with the disease.

"When people tell us their kids' lives have been changed because of the foundation, that makes it worth it," she said.

Her team has already surpassed its fundraising goal for the ride — \$3,500 — and is now hoping to raise \$4,500 before Saturday.

She said she'll be thinking of her friend Jeff this weekend while riding.

And if he was alive today and witnessed her intense workout routines and boundless bike rides?

Gussed Ms. Lattanzio: "He'd say, 'You go girl!'"

To donate to Ms. Lattanzio's Team in Training, go to www.cindiprentisspt.com.