

Tour de Cure sponsor eyes top spot in U.S.

The bicycling event brought in more than \$1 million in 2015

By NATE DOUGHERTY

Rochester's Tour de Cure event has consistently been one of the top in the nation, drawing more than \$1 million each year for the American Diabetes Association, and beating out fundraisers in much larger metro areas.

Next year, Patrick Cunningham wants the No. 1 spot.

The CEO of investment firm Manning & Napier Inc., Cunningham and his company are taking over as the title sponsor of the bike-riding dollars raised event in 2016, bringing plans to expand both participation and total dollars raised. Cunningham noted the top Tour de Cure fundraiser in the nation brings in roughly \$1.4 million, a goal he thinks Rochester can accomplish.

"Rochester has been one of the most active branches for years, and in the 2015 Tour de Cure we were the fourth-highest in the country," he said. "I think it's our time to be No. 1, and that's a doable goal, I believe."

The event, which has been held in Rochester for 25 years, previously was sponsored by Sage Rutty & Co. Inc.

Cunningham hopes to grow participation, mirroring Manning & Napier's own expansion.

"Our involvement with Tour de Cure started with a team of two, and then it started to really grow and get traction within the company," he said. "Now it's not just an event, a ride on a nice day up in Webster; it's a great opportunity to do something for one of the most debilitating illnesses we have."

Cunningham has a strategy to increase participation beyond bike riders themselves, aiming for wider participation that lasts throughout the year and not just around the June event.

The strategy has worked for Cunningham. Manning & Napier finds ways to get



Photo courtesy of Tour de Cure

all employees involved through various fundraisers, and Cunningham believes the firm can set an example for other companies to follow.

"We have fundraising for Tour de Cure throughout the year, like a chili cook-off we had last month," he said. "We had 12 different people make chili, and we put out buckets so employees could throw some money in the one they thought was best. This is something that is not only addressing one of the biggest medical issues we face, but also a great way to promote philanthropy and teamwork among employees."

It is an issue that resonates well because everyone knows someone who is affected by diabetes, Cunningham said.

The disease is a costly one for businesses as well. The ADA shows that diabetes is responsible for \$245 billion in medical costs each year, roughly 20 percent of all health care expenditures. It is a concern that Manning & Napier has seen with its retirement services clients, Cunningham noted.

"This is something near and dear to our clients," he said. "They are getting more and more concerned with the costs of health care, and this is something that we can address and control in many ways."

Travis Heider, regional executive director of the American Diabetes Association in Rochester, said Cunningham is the per-

fect leader for the fund-raising.

"He's jumped in with both feet and led by example," Heider said. "He's extremely competitive and approaches this fund-raiser the same way he approaches his business. It's been tremendous because they've got some very lofty goals but are taking a diversified approach, which goes back to the way they run their business."

The event has benefited from some recent changes, Heider added. The

ride moved to the Xerox Corp. campus in Webster, with route distances of three, 15, 25, 40, 62.5 and 100 miles.

The new scenery, with routes that run along the Lake Ontario shoreline, has been a boost to the event, Heider said.

The ride itself has grown tremendously in the last few years, Heider noted. It raised close to \$460,000 in 2010 with a few dozen corporate teams involved. That has more than doubled now, with the 2015 event topping \$1 million and more than 70 corporate teams involved.

Individual participation was high as well. In last June's event, close to 20 people raised \$2,000 or more.

Heider said he believes Cunningham's leadership and outreach to businesses can push the event toward the No. 1 spot nationally.

"We have a continued strategy to grow corporate presence, and with folks like Patrick Cunningham on board that's a huge help," Heider said. "We can expose people to a cause that is important and also in their business interest, which is preventing and managing diabetes in the workplace. The costs of the disease are skyrocketing, and having employees involved not only raises money but also increases awareness."

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