

Biking with Lance — the dream trip

BY SCOTT HAYES
Staff Writer

One local couple's upcoming scenic bike ride is going to have more than mountains and lakes going for it. A legend of sports and celebrity will make sure of that.

Celine Gannon and James Dean have signed up for an awe-inspiring initiative of the Canadian Breast Cancer Foundation. In late August, both of the intrepid pedal pushers will have the chance of a lifetime to ride 100 kilometres with Lance Armstrong, the famed seven-time Tour de France winner and concurrent testicular, lung and brain cancer survivor. It's not necessarily a race but when you're riding with Armstrong, you can't help but pick your game up a notch or two.

The 100-km round trip will start from the Fairmont Jasper Park Lodge and take a leisurely route around the Rockies and end up back at Maligne Lake. The participants will begin on Aug. 26, right after Armstrong gives a special lunchtime address at the Shaw Conference Centre in Edmonton when he will talk about leadership, hope and inspiration.

As far as Dean and Gannon are concerned, it might be worthwhile to hear about perseverance in the face of adversity. Before they will be allowed to gear up with Armstrong, they have to raise \$25,000. Each.

"We were fans of the Tour de France and Lance," Dean explained. "We heard he was coming to town doing this luncheon. We were going to get tickets to that and I was thinking, 'I know he's done rides in the past. I knew he did one four years ago where he rode through Kananaskis with riders from Calgary so I looked into it a little bit further."

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JAMES DEAN
Cyclist

Maybe they were star struck at the thought because they got on board without going over all of the details for requirements.

"We didn't look before we leaped but just said, 'Let's do it' and we made the decision. We knew we were biting off more than we could chew. We figured it was a great cause and it was worth it. We were going to do it no matter what."

He added cancer has affected them both through their close families.

The price tag doesn't affect him because this is still a once in a lifetime opportunity to brush shoulders with a personal hero and generate substantial funding for a good cause.

The breast cancer foundation supports substantial breast cancer research along with educational programs and promotions for awareness and early diagnosis. Like Armstrong, Dean knows that where there's a will, there's a way. He said that they have already raised about 17 per cent of the target amount so they still need as much support as possible.

To learn more about the organization and the ride, please visit www.cbef.org.

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BEN LEMPHERS/St. Albert Gazette

RIDE OF A LIFETIME – Celine Gannon (left) and James Dean are participating in a LiveStrong fundraising bike ride with Lance Armstrong through the Rockies in August.