

Wheels of Love bike ride supports Alyn Hospital

By Steven Kimmel

Several years ago, a friend talked about taking part in Wheels of Love, a five-day bike ride in Israel that raised funds for Alyn Hospital in Jerusalem. I was just getting back into cycling again and vowed that the following year I would sign up as the thought of combining two of my loves – cycling and Israel – was appealing. The chance to see Israel with more than 400 people from around the world was equally enticing as was the mitzvah of raising money for a hospital in Israel.

After registering in the spring, I realized I needed to begin training. Starting in April, and continuing through the summer and into the fall, I rode my bike through the Gatineau Hills. Many kilometres later, as the departure date approached, I felt I was ready.

I knew nothing about the institution I had committed to raising money for; just that the ride provided a unique opportunity. On my arrival in Tel Aviv, the organizers of the ride were there to meet the many riders coming from Canada and elsewhere. We were taken to the Alyn Hospital in Jerusalem to complete our registration, drop off our bikes and be treated to a tour. At this point, seeing the amazing facility where the money you are raising will be used, it all comes together.

On the morning the ride begins, it is quite amazing to see more than 400 people gathered together and ready to take on the Wheels of Love challenge. The ride offers many options: the 500 km (100 km per day) on-road or off-road; the touring group (50 km per day and area tours); and the challenge group – for the more competitive rid-



Steven Kimmel cycles near Masada on the Wheels of Love bike ride.

ers. Each day begins early in the morning with each group setting off on their assigned route. The days include a mid-morning snack/rest break, a lunch break and the mid-afternoon snack/rest. As you can imagine, the food is nutritious and plentiful. At the end of the day, after checking into the accommodations, resting, showering and changing, the evening provides ample opportunity to meet and visit with riders from all over the world during and after dinner.

I have participated in two Wheels of Love rides and am looking forward to my third in October. The first year I rode, there were nine other Ottawans riding with me. Last year, though, there were only two of us. I am hoping to persuade more people to participate this year. Registration for the 11th annual Wheels of Love ride is now open. Spaces fill up quickly, so do check it out early at alynride.org. Feel free to contact me at skimmel@westboroflooring.com if you have any questions.

See you in Israel!



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