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It started with a burning pain in her foot. Doctors thought it could be anything, from a plantar fasciitis, an injury to the ligament in the bottom of her foot, to tarsal tunnel syndrome, a compression of a nerve inside her ankle, to endometriosis, tissue growth outside her uterus.

None of those proved accurate for Liddy Shriver, who eventually discovered a way to alleviate her pain: cycling three hours a day.

"I would ride my stationary bike for one hour in the morning, one hour in the evening and one hour in the middle of the night," she said. "I found that it helped put my foot to sleep."

Shriver's self-healing went on for several years before a tumor was found behind her knee. On April 4, 2002, the 36-year-old was diagnosed with Ewing's sarcoma, a rare form of bone cancer mostly found in children. Approximately 25 adult cases of Ewing's sarcoma are diagnosed each year in the United States. Children account for 250 cases annually.

In the past year, Shriver, a former Ossining resident who now lives in Jersey City, N.J., has undergone chemotherapy, surgery to remove eight inches of her tibial nerve right below her kneecap, more chemotherapy and radiation. The cancer, however, has metastasized to her lungs. She now has difficulty breathing and experiences tightness in her chest.

Despite frequent hospitalization for chemotherapy, having to wear an ankle brace and other related setbacks, Shriver has never given up on bike riding.

"Cycling is such a pain relief. It is so wonderful," she said. "It is so much better than morphine."

Today, she, along with her husband, parents, brother, nephew and two friends, will embark on the Cycle Zydeco bike tour in Louisiana to raise awareness about sarcoma and to raise funds for sarcoma research at New York-Presbyterian Hospital. The eight-member Team Sarcoma will join about 300 other cyclists on the four-day, 200-mile bike tour that starts and ends in Lafayette, La. So far, the team has raised \$9,000.

"We chose this tour because of Louisiana's flat terrain," said Shriver, who worked as a research scientist at Bell Laboratories before her illness. "I have a dozen tumors in my lungs, so now I'm starting to experience shortness of breath, discomfort when I ride. My average speed and cadence is down."

Still, Shriver said she is up for the 50-mile-per-day ride that should take her about four hours to complete each day.

Her father, Bruce Shriver, an Ossining resident, said he also is ready for the challenge, in spite of having hung his bike up in the garage several years ago.

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"I'm nervous, but we've been training on the weekends, riding 10 to 12 miles each time at several trails in Westchester. Hopefully, that will suffice," the 63-year-old said. "Liddy has been such an inspiration to people with cancer. We just want to help her accomplish her goals in any way that we can."

Shriver's goals are threefold: to raise awareness about sarcoma, a cancer that centers in the connective tissues and accounts for 1 percent of new cancers diagnosed in adults each year, to raise research money and to get young adults to participate in clinical trials.

"There is a real lack of 18- to 44-year-olds participating in clinical trials because they have a difficult time finding trials or being eligible," Shriver said. "But young adults can and should participate in clinical trials in order to increase our survivability."

On April 17, Shriver will begin a Phase I clinical trial using ET-743, an experimental drug made from sea-animal toxin, and Doxil, a more mainstream cancer drug, at Fox Chase Cancer Center in Philadelphia.

The treatment will be administered for four hours once every 21 days. In between installments, Shriver and her family will set out on another bike tour in Denmark, from June 30 to July 5, to raise funds for the Sarcoma Foundation of America. Their goal is to raise a minimum of \$25,000.

The Maryland-based foundation funds grants for sarcoma researchers. So far, the two-year-old organization has raised about \$100,000 and given out three grants, said Dr. Mark Thornton, the foundation's president.

"We're very excited about what the Shriviers are doing. Today, we received \$16,000 in donations that they've raised so far," said Thornton. "Sarcoma is the rarest form of cancer. Any help we can get to raise awareness and money for researchers to find new and innovative therapies to treat sarcoma is so valuable."

Additional information on sponsoring the bike tours or joining Team Sarcoma on its Danish tour, can be found on the Web site www.theshriviers.us/danish_bike_tour.htm.

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