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Larry Pierce/Courtesy

Seven-time Tour de France winner Lance Armstrong (1) and six-time Leadville Trail 100 MTB mountain bike race winner Dave Wiens (2) lead out the pack Sunday morning at Dumont Lake at the beginning of Sunday's Ride 4 Yellow Ride the Divide 26-mile mountain ride.

Steamboat's Ride 4 Yellow event draws massive crowd

By [Joel Reichenberger](#) Sunday, August 8, 2010

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Ride 4 Yellow Divide Ride



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The inaugural Ride4Yellow event drew hundreds to Steamboat Springs, including Lance Armstrong, to raise money to fight cancer.

Steamboat Springs — They came in by themselves, in groups of one and two, sometimes four, and in the case of the day's most famous guest, five.

But they all came, 200 riders streaming 26 miles from Dumont Lake on Rabbit Ears Pass, past the lakes of Routt County's backcountry, over the top of Steamboat Ski Area and down, to the top of the gondola, where a large crowd awaited.

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They represented hope, many would say afterward, and they represented the bulk of the more than \$300,000 Sunday's massive event collected for cancer-fighting charities.

"We started with a direction and a purpose, and it really turned in to an emotional outpouring," event director Dave Nagel said. "I'm not an emotional person, but the true meaning of the event really came out today."

The day's activities were focused around Lance Armstrong, who single-handedly turned the event from big to huge by announcing last month that he planned to participate.

He said in a speech afterward that only a few miles down the trail, he was questioning that decision.

"He told me it was all downhill," Armstrong said with a laugh, speaking about Steamboater Ben Coates, who helped secure Armstrong's commitment while running support for the cyclist during this year's Tour de France. "I did the start, and after 20 or 30 minutes, I was cursing Ben Coates."

Armstrong said he was happy to have been able to make the trip, however, and like nearly everyone else in attendance, he was overwhelmed by the outpouring of support for the fight against cancer.

Everyone, whether they watched or rode, had a story.

Brad Cusenbary, a local cycling activist who has been battling a brain tumor, introduced Armstrong after the ride.

The top 10 money raisers were identified in a post-race ceremony, and each had a story about a loved one fighting cancer.

"You hear these stories," Armstrong said. "We are all here because we have these stories, and it's a constant reminder of how significant and devastating this disease is on a personal level."

Although speakers acknowledged sometimes it's a battle that can't be won, Sunday was more about those afflicted finding the will to fight — that and soaking up the day's delicious singletrack.

Steamboat's Winn Park found time to do both.

He signed up for the day's long ride, which required participants to raise \$500, soon after registration was opened. Two months ago, long after he had made the commitment, his brother, Jeff, was diagnosed with lung cancer.

He already had plenty of perspective on the disease, having lost both of his wife's parents to cancer and his best friend last year.

He gained more.

"It became much more personal," he said. "The only thing I'm disappointed about is that I wasn't involved in the whole kit and caboodle, the planning and organizing. Next year, I will be."

He reached out to everyone he knew to raise funds and found a response that far exceeded the suddenly minimal requirement. He turned to friends and family. He mined his Facebook connections and notified years' worth of business e-mail contacts.

He finished having raised more than \$7,500.

And the riding was fun, too.

"It was as good as it gets," he said about the trail. "How often do you get to ride at race pace on that divide ride in pristine conditions? It was beautiful."

All of Steamboat took part, from ski area executives to Rugby Club ruffians, from children to adults.

Local entities from Ski Haus to Honey Stinger to the skin-cancer awareness organization Mela-KNOW-More were represented at the finish line with tents, and Zephyr Helicopter buzzed above, adding to the day's big-event feel.

The day's color may have been Lance Armstrong yellow, but to organizers, it dawned "oh no" gray, and a light drizzle threatened riders before the 8:15 a.m. start on Rabbit Ears Pass.

It never rained during the ride, however, and participants quickly climbed through and eventually out of the muck.

"It was awesome," Colorado cycling celebrity Dave Wiens said.

He out-dueled Armstrong during a streak of six consecutive victories in the vicious Leadville 100, and again Sunday, the friends and competitors pushed each other.

They didn't roll at race pace, but it was no easy cruise, either.

"It was wet, not in a bad way but in a really good way," Wiens said. "That's a fantastic trail. There are so many trails around here. I'm hearing the Bike Town USA talk, and it's all really cool."

Bike Town USA is more dream than reality now for Steamboat Springs, but for one day, it's a moniker that made perfect sense.

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