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3,100 riders take on Livestrong Challenge in Dripping Springs

Austin-area events raise \$3 million for cancer research, organizers say.



Deborah Cannon/AMERICAN-STATESMAN

ENLARGE PHOTO

Jerry Scroggins, a retired computer consultant from the St. Louis area with a rare form of cancer, made it four miles on Sunday.



Deborah Cannon/AMERICAN-STATESMAN

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Mike Terry of Springdale, Ark., who was diagnosed with kidney cancer more than eight years ago, celebrates finishing the Livestrong Challenge on Sunday with his 18-year-old daughter, Katelyn.

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By Patrick George AMERICAN-STATESMAN STAFF

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DRIPPING SPRINGS — Laurens Flanagan had just completed her second Livestrong Challenge bike ride last year when her cancer hit back hard. She was in intensive care, lost all her hair to chemotherapy and nearly died, she said.

That was then. Now, Flanagan is in remission; is healthy enough to have ridden from South Carolina to Texas with her team, the Palmetto Peloton Project Challenge to Conquer Cancer; and participated in Sunday's challenge ride in Dripping Springs.

"I say, 'Take that, cancer,'" Flanagan said.

She was one of 3,100 riders who took the hills and grades around Dripping Springs for the challenge, organized by the Lance Armstrong Foundation. The events in the Austin area, which included a five-kilometer run and walk Saturday, brought in \$3 million for cancer research, foundation spokeswoman Katherine McLane said.

Other Livestrong Challenge events took place in several cities this summer, but the one in Austin is "our favorite," McLane said. "It's our hometown, and the support keeps growing every year."

In addition to cyclists who are fighting or are survivors of cancer, the ride included friends and family members affected by the disease and people looking to raise money for a good cause, such as actor Patrick Dempsey.

Seven-time Tour de France winner Lance Armstrong, who participated in Sunday's race, established the foundation in 1997 while battling testicular cancer. The foundation aims to improve cancer prevention methods, access to screening and care, quality of life for cancer survivors and investment in research, according to its website.

Having a rare form of cancer didn't keep Jerry Scroggins off his bike. The retired computer consultant from the St. Louis area made it four miles, despite having had surgery and months of chemotherapy to fight his disease.

"Riding always feels good," said Scroggins, who rode with his son and daughter. "It energizes you, gets your blood flowing."

Scroggins said the treatment he's received from the foundation has been "just wonderful" and said it has inspired him in his battle.

"It's so uplifting to know there is so much focus on cancer survivors and research," he said. "It gives you confidence that there might be a cure around the corner."

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