

Bike to the Beach coming to Bethany Aug. 1

Early risers of Washington, D.C. will be greeted Friday, Aug. 1, by a fleet of 100 bike riders beginning their 123-mile trek to Bethany Beach.

But these riders will not just be biking to get in shape; they will be pedaling for a purpose: to raise money and awareness for autism.

Bike to the Beach, a nonprofit organization founded by four Washington, D.C.-area residents will host its ninth annual 123-mile bike ride from New Carrollton Metro, outside of Washington, D.C., to Bethany Beach on Aug. 1. At last year's inaugural fundraising ride the group included 21 riders and raised \$23,000 for autism.

This year Bike to the Beach (B2B) is aiming much higher, hoping for 100 riders with a goal of raising more than \$100,000 for Autism Speaks. With two weeks to go, 75 riders have registered and teamed up to raise just shy of \$75,000.

Bike to the Beach is extending an invitation to everyone in Bethany Beach and surrounding areas to participate in the finish-line festivities on the afternoon of Aug. 1.

Riders are expected to arrive between 2 and 4 p.m. The rider reception will be held at the Bethany Beach Christian Conference Center at the intersection of Atlantic Avenue and Route 1. Festivities will begin at noon and conclude at 6 p.m.

There will be a welcoming area for the riders including a rider recovery tent, an autism information area where people can

learn about Autism Speaks as well as the Lower Delaware Autism Foundation (LDAF), and LDAF will host games and activities designed for families.

Crafts are set to include face painting, foam cutout art and sand art.

There will be a whipped cream pie-eating contest, sack races, limbo competition, inflatable ring toss and more. Popcorn, hot dogs and cold beverages will be provided.

B2B continues to cycle forward with a 100 percent completion rate: no individual has ever failed to reach the steps of Bethany's boardwalk, a feeling most riders can only describe as surreal.

Last year, Holly Bigalow became the first woman to participate in B2B, completing the 120-mile expedition right on pace with the rest of the group. She reflected, "The sense of accomplishment is amazing personally, and as part of the team; I hope this inspires others to challenge themselves.

"I feel that we are all capable of a lot more than we think - physically and mentally."

Co-President Ben Dalley said, "Next year we'll shoot even higher - maybe a half a million [dollars] - because we know that if we put our minds to it, together we can accomplish anything, that's what Bike to the Beach is all about."

For more information on Bike to the Beach for Autism, visit www.biketotheseach.org, or email Kevin Rapp at Krapp@Biketotheseach.org.