



Are You Ready for The Last Gasp?

by Katie O'Sullivan

The teams are already practicing, and the excitement has already started to build.

The Last Gasp is an event not to be missed. The day-long fundraiser consists of a 62-mile bike ride down the length of Cape Cod along beautiful Route 6A, followed by an hour-long cruise across Cape Cod Bay, and ending with a traditional Cape Cod clambake with all the trimmings.

The date for the 21st annual Last Gasp is September 16, kicking off at the Sandwich Marina at 8 a.m. sharp. This is some serious cycling. The first official water stop isn't until Mile 23, in Dennis, with the second official stop at Mile 41, in Wellfleet.

Bikers reach the "Last Gasp Hill" somewhere after Mile 56, in North Truro. A short but steep hill, they say it takes your "last gasp" to get to the top without getting off your bike. The final five miles of the race may seem like the longest ever ridden on a bicycle, until the riders finally enter Provincetown.

The bicycles are packed onto trucks while the riders join a lunch reception at the Surf Club, at the foot of MacMillian Wharf. At 2:00 p.m., the Portuguese Princess will load up and head back to Sandwich for the clambake at the American Legion in Sandwich, starting at 3:30 p.m.

It's a pretty full day.



Team WE CAN rider Allison Lahey

Challenging your stamina is not the only purpose of The Last Gasp. It's also one of the Cape's major fundraisers of the year for local nonprofits. Last year's bike race earned \$447,602 for the eight designated charities.

This year's beneficiaries include Hospice and Palliative Care of Cape Cod, Cape & Islands United Way, Silent Spring Institute, Cultural Center of Cape Cod, Kiwanis of Hyannis and Sandwich, Cape Cod Young Professionals, and Champ Homes. Unlike some other fundraisers, 100% of all money raised by the riders goes directly to the charitable organizations.

Andi Genser, Executive Director at WE CAN, rode in last year's Last Gasp race. "It's an incredibly empowering experience," she said, as she discussed her team's plans for this year's ride. The WE CAN team is made up of board members, volunteers, staff and people from the programs. "Last year we had a team of ten, this year we may have twenty people, ranging in age from 39 to 71!"

Her team has already started their training rides twice a week, which she says will continue all summer. While she enjoys both bike riding and the camaraderie, she says it's also great to be able to be part of an "empowering event that raises awareness for WE CAN and ties into our mission," all while having fun.



Team WE CAN at the 2011 Last Gasp

Jane Bourette, of Drake Saunders & Diwisky, rode with the 2011 WE CAN team. She says, "It was an incredible experience. I really enjoyed every minute of it and look forward to doing it again this year."

Stephanie Boosahda, a staff member at WE CAN, was also part of last year's team. She'd always wanted to ride in the event, but didn't think she could last 62 miles on her bicycle.

"Andi assured me that the Team WE CAN would have training sessions. Each week I joined close to a dozen others biking from beach to beach, thoroughly enjoying the Cape. About mid-July I asked, 'So, when are we going to start training?' To which Andi replied, 'What do you think we've been doing all this time?'"

"Amazingly, the training was just plain fun, and the actual Ride Day, was, as our captains, Andi and Pam Patrick, predicted, like a victory lap." Stephanie has already signed up to be part of that fun again this year.



Team WE CAN Training Ride

"Fun" seems to be a big part of the mission for The Last Gasp, and for the organization that dreamed up the event, Cape Cod Charitable FunRaisers. On their website, founder Bill Murphy says his group tries "to create events that are a little different from the mainstream." They also guarantee that 100% of money raised or donated goes to the charities, which he thinks is what really sets his organization apart.

To register yourself or a team for The Last Gasp, [visit the website](#). There's an \$85 registration fee to participate in the full "Bike-Boat-Bake" event, or a \$50 option for just "Bus-Bake," for friends and loved ones who want to be supportive (and enjoy the clambake) but aren't up for the 62-mile ride.

There's a \$500 minimum for fundraising, with your choice of which beneficiaries receive your donations. The registration deadline is September 4, but only the first 200 registrants will have spots on the boat cruise, so sign up soon.

One of the fun events leading up to The Last Gasp is the 3rd annual Last Gasp/Cape Cod Beer Bash. This year it'll be held on August 17, from 5 p.m. to 9 p.m. at the Cape Cod Brewery on Phinneys Lane in Hyannis. The advertisements boast "Summer fun at it's best, without a lot of training involved."

Tickets for the Beer Bash are \$25, which gets you 4 drink/food tickets to be used any way you like at the beer and food booths. (Additional tickets are \$5 each.) There will be live music, a silent auction, and some unique live auction items as well. Again, 100% of the proceeds will go to the Last Gasp beneficiaries. If you prefer flip flops and beer over bike shorts and training sessions, be sure to put this on your summer calendar. For more information visit www.capecodbeer.com

All photographs courtesy of WE CAN

Katie O'Sullivan is the editor of this magazine. While she respects and admires those who ride in the Last Gasp, she personally prefers flip flops over bike shorts, and gets most of her exercise by walking her dogs. Visit her blog at <http://katieosullivan.blogspot.com>

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