

# HeartLand Tour spreads heart-health awareness

Tour founded on the principle that preventing cardiovascular disease is easier and cheaper than treating it



The seventh annual HeartLand Tour rolled through Truro July 10. (Beth Suddard photo)

It may have looked like a bike race, but everyone was there to get their blood pumping in the name of cardiovascular health — not for medals or trophies.

The seventh annual HeartLand Tour rolled through Truro on July 10. A group of physicians, healthcare workers, medical students left Hub Cycle on Inglis Place at 9:30 a.m. and cycled for 62.5 km before finishing up at Victoria Park shortly after 12:30 p.m. A crowd of several hundred cheered and applauded for the cyclists, who smiled and waved as they biked in as a group. After enjoying free bottled water, milk, apples, and Subway subs, children were invited to hop on their bikes and join the HeartLand team for a ride around Victoria Park.

“We want to get the message across the cycling is something the whole family can do — and that it’s important for families to be active together,” says Raj Makkar, manager of Ambulatory Care/Cardio-Respiratory Services at Colchester East Hants Health Centre in Truro.

“The younger we can get kids physically active, the less health problems they’re going to run into later on.”

The HeartLand Tour was started back in 2007 by Dr. Nicholas Giacomantonio, cardiologist at the QEII Health Sciences Centre and president of the Cardiac Cycle Society of Nova Scotia. The tour was founded on the principle that preventing cardiovascular disease is easier and cheaper than treating it. Since Nova Scotia’s risk of heart disease is higher than the national average, Dr. Giacomantonio wanted to draw attention to the reduction of cardiac and health risk factors in the health of Nova Scotians.

In a 2012 issue of Maclean’s magazine, Colchester East Hants/Cumberland County was named the second-most overweight region in Canada, and Makkar says we should consider it “a wake-up call.”

“When you see the youth obesity rates, it’s just mind-blowing, so we need to see some change,” says Makkar. “If you’re able to walk, cycle, or do exercise of any kind, it pays off dividends in the long run in terms of your health. It doesn’t matter how old you are — your health is the most important thing you can obtain or achieve yourself.”

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