

Spinning spokes, reducing strokes



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Nick Giacomantonio, an organizer for the Nova Scotia Heartland Tour, was on hand Tuesday as the tour made its annual stop in Truro. With more than 300 people at Victoria Park, Giacomantonio was ecstatic with the turnout.

Ryan Cooke/Truro Daily News

Heartland Tour makes stop in Truro, promotes cardiovascular health

TRURO – A glance around Victoria Park on Tuesday afternoon and the camaraderie couldn't be clearer.

More than 300 people gathered to take part in the 8th annual Heartland Tour stop in Truro. Cyclists geared in matching suits sat around at picnic tables after finishing their 15 or 52-kilometre ride through town. Kids ran around and played, enjoying face painting, clowns and a bike ride of their own.

The event is a fun ride with bigger implications, said organizer Nick Giacomantonio.

"It's a fun time, with lots of activities for kids and adults, but what it's really about is promoting cardiovascular rehabilitation," he said.

Giacomantonio, a cardiologist and associate professor of medicine at Dalhousie, calls Truro one of his favourite stops on the provincial tour.

"It's amazing to come here and see the amount of support we get," he said. "Truro really makes it their event. They really care about their community and take steps to make it better."

The unity between riders is something that keeps the cyclists coming to events such as the Heartland Tour.

"It's all about the camaraderie, really," said Jody Mattie, who took part in the morning ride. "This is a tightknit group of people who all love to ride, and care about each other's health."

Riders gathered at Hub Cycle at 9:30 a.m. to embark on their route. The short ride went through Lower Truro and Truro Heights, before coming back to Victoria Park through Millbrook. The adventurous few who opted for the long ride went on a scenic tour to Millbrook and back. More than 100 riders registered for the rides.

As part of the tour, the Heartland group partners with Lawtons to bring a health tent along with them. Volunteers set up shop at Victoria Park on Tuesday in a tent at the middle of the field. Participants were welcome to get their blood pressure checked, and were given information on heart attack and stroke prevention.

Dalhousie medical student Brett Barro lent a hand running things in the tent, manning the blood pressure monitor and giving info.

Cardiovascular health awareness is a murky problem, he said. While people seem to be aware of their health, they have problems understanding how to prevent or improve problems.

"(People) come up to us and say they have high blood pressure or other cardiovascular problems," Barro said. "But the fact that it's such a common problem suggests there is an

awareness issue with the severity of it.”

Barro and his colleagues are also conducting a study during the tour, measuring stroke and atrial fibrillation risk in Nova Scotians.

As Giacomantonio and crew packed their tour bus and headed out, he remarked once again on the reception from the town.

“It’s been a great day in a great community,” he said. “The people here are very passionate about the cause – their health – and cycling.”