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*Megan Vidis (312) 628-0225
Maura Daly (312) 628-0224
Cell (708) 285-1632*

Aurora teen organizes first team to pedal away lung disease

Most teenagers spend their summers sleeping in and hanging out with friends. In addition to working two jobs, Waubonsie Valley High School student Bre Bush spends her free time mobilizing and motivating her friends to fight lung disease.

Bush created the first ever Team Teen to get teens involved with the CowaLUNGa Bike Tour presented by Respiratory Health Association of Metropolitan Chicago (RHAMC). The three-day bike tour (with a one-day and a two-day option), held Saturday, August 2 – Monday, August 4, 2008, winds through Illinois into Wisconsin and covers 190 miles. All proceeds from the CowaLUNGa Bike Tour benefit RHAMC's mission to promote healthy lungs and fight lung disease through research, advocacy, and education.

Bush began participating in the CowaLUNGa Bike Tour with her parents in 2006. She thought the ride was going to be difficult but, though the ride was mostly adults, she had a great time.

"We all bonded over the experience so age didn't matter," Bush says. "I learned a lot from those on the ride."

Now approaching her third ride, Bush wanted her friends to experience the positive message of the ride.

"As young people, we see a lot of our friends smoking to be cool," Bush says, "but there are a lot of people on the ride that have quit and some lung cancer survivors. It opens your eyes to a lot of the dangers—it would be great for my friends to hear."

Bush and her team are determined to raise the funds to cover each teammate's registration fee and provide additional donations. Wendy's restaurant across from Waubonsie Valley High School will designate a night and donate 15% of those proceeds to her cause. The team will also host a car wash at a local Jewel and a charity dance party at the Oakhurst North Clubhouse.

Additionally, Bush took her message to the internet and created a Facebook event to alert her friends and other teens of this opportunity. "CowaLUNGa Bike Tour (Team Teen)" already has 19 guests and is growing. She and other teammates will participate in the training rides provided by RHAMC as well as creating their own.

Chicago's Lung Health
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1440 W. Washington Blvd.
Chicago, IL 60607-1878
Phone: (312) 243-2000
Fax: (312) 243-3954
www.lungchicago.org

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Bush encourages her friends and peers to participate in the ride if not for the health message than for the fun.

“It’s a blast! It’s the best weekend I have the entire summer and I’ve been doing it with adults—going with my friends and other teens will be even better,” Bush says.

Recognized by their matching cycling jerseys, Team Teen will be accompanied, supported, and chaperoned by many adults on the ride as they set out to achieve their goals.

Individuals wishing to support Bre Bush and Team Teen can visit www.lungchicago.org, click the CowaLUNGa icon, then Search/Sponsor a Climber and type Team Teen.

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