

Mark Ray Rides for Heart Health

“I feel his presence often when I’m out there,” said Mark Ray about his late father and the cycling fundraiser he co-founded in his memory. Jim Ray, an avid cyclist, died of heart disease in 1996 just two years before Mark’s first child was born.

“It’s been a way to keep my father a part of my life, to benefit my health, give back to the community and make a small contribution to heart disease research,” says Mark of the Jim Ray Memorial Heart Ride, an annual event which has raised nearly \$170,000 for heart disease prevention and research since the inaugural trip in 2000.

Early Career Investigators at UVM Medical Center’s Cardiovascular Research Institute of Vermont (CVRI) are the beneficiaries of the 2017 Heart Ride. Funds raised will give CVRI scientists and physicians at the start of their careers a chance to attend leading-edge conferences and educational forums.



“Such opportunities can have a significant impact in the long-term,” says Mark. “You never know what a promising young researcher will learn in that environment and what it might inspire them to produce during their career.”

This summer’s ride involved more than 120 miles of grueling terrain: through the Appalachian Gap, the Middlebury Gap, around Lake Dunmore, across the Brandon Gap, and then up to the Killington Ski Area where Mark and his cycling and fundraising partner Steve Gronlund were photographed. (The total of 17 fingers raised signifies the 17th consecutive year of the ride).

Mark describes his father as a man who was “passionate about what he did.” When asked to describe the most memorable moment of this year’s ride, Mark answered, “riding down the App Gap in wind and pouring rain...the air about 40 degrees...unable to see through the water or if there were cracks or bumps in the road...the downhill so steep I had to brake constantly....”

Sounds like a passionate man.

Like father, like son.