
Mark Ray Rides (again) for Heart Health

June 10, 2018

For the past 17 years, **Mark Ray** and his cycling and fundraising partner Steve Gronlund, have devoted countless hours of training and cycling to honor the memory of Mark's father—who died of heart disease at age 64—and raise funds for heart disease research. In recent years, Mark, a member of the Cardiovascular Research Institute of Vermont's Cardiovascular Leadership Council, has directed these funds to the CVRI.

For the **18th Annual Jim Ray Memorial Heart Ride** on June 9, Mark and Steve were joined by Dan Nelson, a boyhood friend of Steve's from Minnesota. That Dan was able to join them and complete the ride is especially significant since he had open-heart surgery last October to repair a mitral valve in his heart.

This year's ride was 200-miles (also known as a “double century”) on a route called Le P'tit Train du Nord. The trail, built on an old railway line that closed in the late 1980s, winds through the Laurentian Mountains in Saint-Jérôme, Quebec, just north of Montréal.

The odyssey began at 4:45 a.m. at the old railway station in Saint-Jérôme and ended in the same location 17 hours later. The riders logged more than 13 hours on their bikes, guided in the morning and evening by their bike headlights and, toward the end of the ride, by their strong desires for a hot shower.

The riders had a beautiful, cloudless day and the route, known for its spectacular scenery, took them alongside rivers and lakes, through forests, around the base of mountains, and close to deer—a lot of deer. “At about mile 188, we had a misunderstanding with a deer that led to all three of us on the ground,” said Mark. “Thankfully, the gravel path was slightly more forgiving than asphalt would have been, and we all survived with only minor scrapes and bruises.”



At the 100 mile mark in Lac-Saguay, half done and still smiling. From left: Mark, Dan, and Steve.



Dan and Steve at Chez Jojo in Nominuingue. They admit it wasn't the heart-healthiest meal but they needed the calories.



Back in Saint-Jérôme after 200 miles—the double century.
