



A Walk in the Woods Leads to Nation's Most Successful Bike-a-Thon *PMC Founder Billy Starr Sets Pace for Thousands*

BOSTON – Surprisingly, it was a cold, wet, and often lonely *walk* in the woods that inspired the philosophy behind the nation's original fundraising bike-a-thon for charity, the Pan-Massachusetts Challenge.

“To reap the rewards, you have to do the work.” In its Zen-like simplicity, this is what PMC Founder and Executive Director Billy Starr took home from a 400-mile hike through the northern and most challenging part of the Appalachian Trail. This knowledge, learned years ago, has not only shaped his life but has enabled him to run what is today the single most successful athletic fundraising event in the nation.

Physical adventures had always been second nature to Starr, an avid outdoorsman who honed his skills while attending college in Colorado. From rock climbing, to biking, to backpacking, Starr's education was equally physical and academic; he graduated from college with a thirst for physical challenges and the expectation of backpacking around the world.

And then his mother, Betty Starr, just 49, died from melanoma.

It was soon after that a 25-year-old Starr set out with three friends to hike the infamous Appalachian Trail. Since Starr was the instigator, he ended up doing all the work: He planned the group's gear, food, and travel pace. He set up supply mailings to the appropriate post offices. He carried the heaviest load, both emotionally and physically. And when nature pelted the young men with freezing rain for the first eight straight days of their trek, it was Starr who encouraged the group to keep going no matter what, and to keep focused on the challenge. Two of Starr's three hiking mates diverted from the trail seeking respite from the elements in quick journeys home; they returned to find Starr on the Trail as committed as he was the day they left Katahdin, and as pure in his theory and methods.

From this experience, Starr says he understood that those who put in the mental energy, not just the physical energy, follow their goals from theory to mission accomplished. From that point forward, Starr knew he could accomplish anything to which he committed his mind AND body.

The PMC is founded

In 1977, Starr initiated a new annual routine. He would wake up at 4 a.m. and hop on his bike, focused on making it to Provincetown with enough time to catch the 3:30 p.m. ferry back to Boston. The grueling 140-mile ride, accomplished with amazing speed, was something he did for fun.

But in 1980, Starr led dozens of friends who together had formed a loftier goal than just achieving speed or testing their endurance. This time they made a weekend out of it and set a goal of raising money to combat cancer, a disease that had claimed Starr's mother, his uncle, a cousin and the lives of so many others.

When the cyclists gathered in Springfield, Massachusetts on that Saturday morning, Starr's mind was focused solely on finishing with the group still intact. But by Sunday afternoon, Starr had found his calling and the Pan-Massachusetts Challenge was born.

The group of 36 rode 220 miles, raised \$10,200, and donated it to the Jimmy Fund, which supports cancer research and care at Boston's world-renowned Dana-Farber Cancer Institute. It was then that Starr committed himself to organizing the PMC each year and told Dana-Farber officials to expect annual checks that would increase in value.

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He wasn't kidding. Under Starr's direction, the PMC has grown considerably and consistently from its modest beginnings into an event that draws 5,000 cyclists from 36 states and eight countries. Today, the Pan-Massachusetts Challenge raises more money than any other athletic fundraising event in the country. The PMC generates half of the Jimmy Fund's annual revenue and it is Dana-Farber's single largest contributor. In August 2008, cyclists will ride with the goal of raising \$34 million and bringing the PMC's 29-year Jimmy Fund contribution to \$238 million.

The now nationally recognized PMC is a tribute to Starr's unending desire to achieve, make a difference, and raise money for cancer research.

The PMC Philosophy

While there are today many athletic fundraising events, the PMC is undoubtedly the most successful in terms of the money raised and the percentage of funds it contributes directly to charity. In 2007, 100 percent of all funds raised by PMC riders went directly to the Jimmy Fund. The PMC is among the leanest of fundraising organizations in the nation.

Starr's commitment to running the efficient non-profit is testament to his savvy business skills, his organizational fortitude, and that enduring lesson he learned while on that cold, wet walk in the woods. "The success of this event is due to the fact that all PMC riders are encouraged – actually, required – to take their fundraising commitment as seriously as their physical commitment to ride the event," Starr says.

This summer, each of the 5,500 cyclists will commit to raising between \$1,300 and \$4,000 for the privilege of being a member of the PMC team. The majority of PMC participants, however, exceeds the minimum contribution and raises more than *twice* the amount required.

In the same vein, Starr organizes and relies upon thousands of volunteers to orchestrate the three-day event. From mapping the route, to constructing water and food stops, to ensuring medical attention and safety for thousands, 2,600 PMC volunteers commit their time, resources, and energy to the event without financial compensation. The team effort that makes the PMC the success it is today is a product of Starr's philosophy that those who commit themselves in full are those who achieve results.

In 1993, Starr and the PMC were awarded the Jimmy Fund's highest honor, the Thomas A. and Jean R. Yawkey Memorial Award for outstanding service. In 1997, the pedestrian bridge connecting Dana-Farber's new Richard A. and Susan F. Smith Research Laboratories to its Dana Building was dedicated in honor of the event's contribution to the advancement of cancer research as the "Pan-Massachusetts Challenge Bridge to Progress." A graduate of the University of Denver, in 1978, Starr earned a masters degree in education from Northeastern University. In 1998, he received an honorary degree from Babson College and in November 2004, Dana-Farber gave Starr the Sidney Farber Medical Research Award for the exceptional contribution he has made to reduce the burden of cancer on society. In 2006, the national Lung Cancer Alliance presented Starr and the PMC with a lifetime achievement award. "The PMC has made what we do at Dana-Farber possible," said Dana-Farber President Edward J. Benz, Jr., M.D. "When they write the history of how cancer was conquered, the PMC will be in chapter one."

The Pan-Massachusetts Challenge

The PMC, presented by the Red Sox Foundation and Overstock.com raises more money than any other athletic fundraising event in the country. On August 2 and 3, 2008, 5,000 cyclists will travel seven routes, logging between 47 and 190 miles over one or two days, through 46 scenic Massachusetts towns to raise \$34 million. For more information about the PMC, call 800-WE-CYCLE or visit www.pmc.org.

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