

# Competitors bike the distance for people with disabilities

Shelley Gautier Para-Sport Foundation aims to put an active lifestyle within reach to all



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Richard Hutton/Staff Photo

*Peggy Humber, who lost part of her right leg in an accident, has turned to a hand cycle to remain active.*

[Niagara This Week - Niagara Falls](#)

NIAGARA FALLS — They came, they rode — and they didn't move an inch.

But that didn't mean the kilometres weren't racked up by the participants in the inaugural Shelley Gautier Para-Sport Foundation Stationary Bike Race at Club Italia on Saturday.

The goal was to raise funds for outdoor cycling programs, including equipment such as hand-powered and tandem bicycles for people with disabilities.

"The need is so huge," said Alan Greer, CEO of the foundation. "In the end it comes down to cities have challenges and don't know how to provide the help."

That, he said, is where the foundation comes in.

"We organize the equipment, we organize the activities so everybody is safe," he said.

The foundation has expanded rapidly with chapters established in Niagara Falls, home to para-sport cyclist Shelley Gautier — who has won eight world titles in para-cycling and also competed in the London 2012 Paralympics — for whom the foundation is named, St. Catharines, Brantford, Hamilton and Ottawa. In Niagara, programming is run two days a week in Niagara Falls and another two days a week at Brock University in St. Catharines.

"The whole idea is about bringing para-sports to the disabled," Greer said.

Heading up the Niagara Chapter of the foundation is Peggy Humber, who lost part of her right leg as the result of an accident.

"I was lucky enough that I came to know a pretty elite athlete," Humber said as she prepared for a second ride on a hand-operated bicycle.

"It's very important for people to realize they can do things differently," Humber said. "They can ride differently. They can ride with their arms and not their legs. They just see the status quo out there."

But help is needed for people with disabilities to pursue an active lifestyle.

"People can look on TV at what there is they can do but it's not like they can just go to Canadian Tire and purchase a bike."

Gautier's mom, Suzanne Letourneau, helped organize Saturday's event and said money raised would be staying close to home.

"All money raised will stay in the community," she said. "We have three hand cycles, two tandems for para-cycling programs that begin in June."

There were seven teams of riders plus two celebrity teams taking part in the event.

Celebrity Team No. 2 with riders Richard DesChatelets, Gord Singleton, Mike Strange, Chris Critelli, Freddie, Dougie, Doug and Lynn Hamilton and Linda DesChatelets won the challenge clocking the furthest distance with 105.7 kilometres.

Celebrity Team No. 2 also brought in the most pledges with \$5,295 raised.

In total, the event raised \$17,000 with donations still coming in.

Letourneau, for one, was grateful.

"We did fantastic for our first annual stationary bike race," Letourneau said.

She was also appreciative of the support from the community, including Club Italia, which donated the space used for Saturday's event.

More information of the foundation can be found at [www.sgpsf.ca](http://www.sgpsf.ca).

Richard Hutton is a Reporter-Photographer for Niagara this Week, covering Niagara Falls. Covering everything from politics to community stories and everything in between, Richard has won a pair of Ontario Community Newspaper Awards for his work and has been recognized for his long-time commitment to the industry with the OCNA's Silver Quill Award.