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Cyclist 2016

As we go through life, sometimes our circumstances change and cause us to notice something that we never noticed before. Or perhaps we focus on something we were aware of, but hadn't previously paid much attention to....

In the Spring of 2016, I saw a post on Facebook that my friend Denise Hindinger had set up a team for Closer to Free, named "Tony's Tigers" in memory of her father who had recently lost his battle with cancer. I had seen CTF on Facebook in prior years, but didn't know too much about it. Although I had been riding my bike for years for exercise, I had considered myself a "trail" rider and had never gone much more than 12 miles in a single ride. But, I "tuned in" to CTF this time because in 2015, one of my college roommates died of lung cancer, and a few months later, an extended family member also passed away. A few other friends were treated successfully at Smilow. All of a sudden, CTF was more personal to me.

After doing a little research about the ride routes, I signed up to ride the 25-mile. At the same time, I began my fundraising. There are a lot of worthy causes to support, but I think that cancer is one that almost everyone has encountered and can relate to on some level.

When I crossed the finish line on ride day, I was almost overcome with emotion; the exhilaration of having prepared well and the feeling of being accompanied by angels along the way created one of the most awe-inspiring moments of my life. Everyone involved in CTF shares a common bond and it contributes to an incredibly selfless and empowering experience. After the ride, I signed up to ride the 62.5-mile "metric century" this September. It's a reach, but last year I didn't think I could do 25 and I did. There's no better feeling than working as part of a team toward a common goal—whether as a rider or a volunteer. When your own physical and mental health improves as a result, it is an added incentive.

