



## Journey of a lifetime to save lives

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(Sawyer, Perlmutter, and a myeloma patient along with Perlmutter's brother who rode to the ferry to New York from New Jersey together. )

Former Duxbury resident Diane Sawyer has enjoyed the freedom of bikes ever since she was a little girl living on Bay Road. However, these days she rides with a much different purpose in mind.

Sawyer (formerly Lillie) is cycling with friend Marty Perlmutter from Jacksonville, Florida all the way to Kittery, Maine to raise money and awareness for a deadly cancer, multiple myeloma (MM), which attacks the blood stream starting in the bone marrow and interferes with production of normal blood cells.

For Alicia O'Neill, the head of Endurance Events at the Multiple Myeloma Research Foundation, the pair is helping to raise more than just money.

"They are trying to help eradicate a disease that took a friend," said O'Neill. "Diane is really just supporting a friend who is supporting a friend."

Sawyer started her journey on June 17 in Jacksonville and is now almost done with her

1,400-mile journey through 13 states. How she got involved in this trip was all a matter of fate.

“Last year I saw Marty and he had this idea to fundraise for MM in honor of his friend,” said Sawyer. “I had work commitments and wasn’t sure I could make it, but about two weeks before the trip I said, ‘Marty, I can go, I want to go.’ ”

Now that Sawyer is entering the last leg of her trip and back into her home turf of New England, the experience has taken on new meaning. A surprise discovery and donation from a relative has given Sawyer the last push she needs to finish her ride.

“I just got a donation from my sister-in-law in Duxbury,” Sawyer said. “She told me that my in-laws had passed away from multiple myeloma and I had never known. They were Dottie and Bill Sawyer. They lived on Harrison Street and Dottie was a wonderful second mother to me.”

While the loss of her family members has been heartbreaking, Sawyer knows it was a sign and will give her the courage she needs to finish her journey. Sawyer also hopes that people from all over will reach out with similar stories and money to help end this disease.

“Regardless what kind of cancer it is, cancer is cancer,” said Sawyer. “The fact that we can raise awareness and money for research will open doors for all cancers and, ultimately, for cures.”

Calling in from a road stop in Connecticut, Sawyer expressed the importance of her journey and what she hopes it will accomplish.

“Research can help all cancers,” Sawyer said. “What anybody with any illness has to go through is incredible, whether you’re riding 1400 miles or fighting to survive against illness it takes courage. There are a lot of parallels.”

Sawyer certainly isn’t lacking in courage since she has been riding upwards of a 100 miles a day for most of her journey. For Sawyer, who is 64 years old, this was no small undertaking.

“I couldn’t look at the enormity of our plans at first,” Sawyer said. “It was too overwhelming, I just try to take it one day at a time.”

Just like fighting an illness, all anyone can do is take it one day at a time and Sawyer is well aware that some days are harder than others.

“One day the winds were just brutal,” Sawyer said. “There were 20 mph winds coming head on, and the first few days were really hot, and I have gotten some bumps and bruises along the way. I just think to myself one more half hour, one more half hour.”

The pair expects to raise \$20,000 for multiple myeloma research with their ride and hopes the last stretch will bring in many more donations. The strenuous journey ends today (July 3) in Kittery, Maine and Sawyer plans to visit her old hometown of Duxbury.

“I’m getting more emotional as we get closer to the end,” said Sawyer. “It’s been an epic journey and there is a strong emotional component for me. New England is my home turf, it’s very emotional.”

The best part of undertaking a life event like this bike trip for Sawyer has been seeing people’s humanity.

“People have been very supportive of us,” Sawyer said. “We stopped for a break in South Carolina on a really hot day and we pulled into this office parking lot for shade and water. The owner of the office, an accountant, came out and asked us what we were doing and about our cause and then he goes, ‘Oh my gosh I’ve got to get you water!’ He got us a garden hose, and after 6 hours in the heat it was a simple gesture but it made our day and then his sister came out with a \$50 donation.”

To Sawyer the simple generosity of strangers has made this trip unforgettable and it’s that same generosity they are counting on to help find a cure for multiple myeloma and many other cancers. To donate to the cause visit [active.com/donate/2012mmrfYOR/MartyCure](http://active.com/donate/2012mmrfYOR/MartyCure) or [themmrf.org](http://themmrf.org).