

CHERRY HILL — Barry Schultz made a muscle with his right arm. He bent his elbow, pointed his fist to the sky and squeezed the bicep like an Arnold Schwarzenegger pose in "Pumping Iron."

Schultz, though, wasn't showing off his "guns" as the body builders say.

Actually, he was showing what was missing. His right bicep isn't really there anymore.

Schultz was diagnosed with Amyotrophic Lateral Sclerosis (ALS) more than two years ago. The debilitating disease -- also known as Lou Gehrig's Disease -- attacks the muscles of the body.

However, Schultz's strength can't be measured by the size of his bicep. Not nearly. His admirable strength lives in his heart and his head.

For the last two years, Schultz has ridden his bike down the shore in the ALS Express ride to raise money and awareness for the deadly disease. Or, as he says, "to find a cure."

But, when Schultz talks about finding a cure, he doesn't say this for himself. Rather, he hopes to help find a cure for future ALS sufferers. The average lifespan for someone with ALS is two to five years. "I'm in OT," Schultz, a long-time and highly respected basketball official, said with a smile, referencing a basketball term of overtime.

"I saw my doctor last week and he said what ever I'm doing he wish he could bottle and give to all his patients," Schultz added while preparing to officiate a recent men's basketball league game at the Jewish Community Center in Cherry Hill.

This year, the ALS Express ride is in Schultz's deserving honor.

"It is so unusual to have someone with ALS to have the energy and drive to be able to ride," said Ellyn Phillips, the president of the Greater Philadelphia Chapter of the ALS Association. "That would be enough for Barry to receive this recognition, but he is also such an inspiration. He really is a great guy and a wonderful representative of the organization and of others who have this disease."

"I will be riding again this year and hoping to ride for many more years," said Schultz, who has lived in Haddon Heights all his life.

Schultz, 53, credits his positive attitude to the support of his family -- wife Sue, and daughters Stacey, 27, Jenny, 25, and Kristy, 23.

"You can't take it away," he said philosophically about ALS, "you deal with what you have and make the best of it."

And, how he has dealt with this disease has been an inspiration to so many. Especially, his family and those who see him ride to the shore each year.

"It means so much to me," his daughter Kristy said about riding with her dad. "When we go to ALS events and you see how the disease affects so many, our fear was we didn't know if it would affect him that that way. So to be able to ride with him the last two years is amazing.

"It is definitely inspirational to others who have ALS and also to the families who are affected. I love doing it."

This is the third year Barry's Bikers are participating in the ALS Express. Barry's Bikers have raised more than \$18,500 the first two years.

The ALS Express bike ride was started by the Eileen Frank ALS Foundation in 1999. After being diagnosed in 1999, Eileen Frank lived with ALS for two years before losing her battle with the disease in 2001.

The ride is hosted every year to honor her memory and to help raise money for ALS research.

Schultz is the third highest money raiser as an individual the last two years and his team has been the fourth best money maker.

The ALS Express is a non-competitive bike-a-thon for people of all ages and riding abilities through South Jersey. There are four distance options: the 75-mile ride starts at 7 a.m.; the 50-mile ride starts at 8:30 a.m.; the 25-mile ride starts at 10 a.m.; the 10-mile ride starts at 11 a.m.

Schultz and most of the Barry's Bikers are doing the 25-mile ride starts at Dennis Township Elementary School in Dennisville

"After attending the recent ALS Hot Chocolate outing, I am blessed for still being able to do all the thing I still do," he said. "Many of the patients in attendance would be happy just to be able to walk, talk or join any team in the ride, let alone referee a basketball game."

Schultz was diagnosed with ALS in May 2006 and he rode down the shore the next month.

"My kids all said that they would do it and my wife came up with the name of Barry's Bikers," said Schultz, who works at Bristol-Meyers-Squibb in Lawrenceville.

The first year, Barry's Bikers had 25 riders. Last year, 19 rode.

"Hopefully, this year we have more," Schultz said.

Schultz, who graduated from Gloucester Township Technical School in 1973, started officiating high school basketball in 1977. He advanced into college refing in 1989.

Last year, he officiated 70 games, mostly on the Division III college level.

"I'm very fortunate, I haven't missed anything," he said. "I go to some functions and I see some people and I know how fortunate I am."

At first Schultz didn't want the coaches to know he had ALS. He just wants to be treated the same by coaches. But, with raising money and awareness for ALS, it was impossible for coaches not to find out.

The tribute to Schultz is that no one watching him ref could tell he had ALS.

"I work year-round to stay in shape," Schultz said. "I run and lift weights to stay in shape for basketball."

"I look at the end of each season if I can ref next year," Schultz said.

With Schultz's attitude, that will be a long, long time not only officiating, but riding to the shore.

"Each year is a blessing that he rides with us," said his wife, Sue. "I'm not a biker, but to see his determination and to know the whole cause gives you the strength to do it."

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HOW TO HELP

Ã,The ALS Express is a charity bike ride co-hosted with Morey's Piers. All money raised by the ALS Express will benefit the ALS Association and will be used for research.[PARA]

Ã,The ALS Express will be June 21. The ALS Express offers 75-mile, 50-mile, 25-mile and 10-mile ride options.[PARA]

Ã,The 75-mile ride will start at Camden County College in Blackwood at 7 a.m. and wind its way to Wildwood. The 50-mile ride will start at Susquehanna

Patriot Bank in Vineland at 8:30 a.m. The 25-mile ride will start at Dennis Township Elementary School in Dennisville at 10 a.m. The 10-mile ride will start at Cape May Foods in Cape May Court House at 11 a.m.[PARA]

Ã,There will be five rest stops along the ride where riders will be provided light food and beverages.[PARA]

Ã,The ALS Express will provide support and gear vans and emergency medical services.[PARA]

Ã,Adult rider registration is \$110. Youth registration for ages 13 and younger is \$75. The registration fee will increase \$25 on May 10.[PARA]

Ã,To find out more about the ALS Express, become a member of Barry's Bikers or make a donation, go to www.als-express.org. [PARA]

AMYOTROPHIC LATERAL SCLEROSIS[PARA]

Amyotrophic Lateral Sclerosis is a progressive, terminal disease of the nervous system. It gradually disables the neurons that send messages to the muscles, weakening the muscles and restricting the patient's mobility.[PARA] It does this without affecting the mind, thus leaving the patient trapped inside an immobile body. There is no known cause of, or cure for, this fatal disease which currently affects more than 30,000 people in the U.S.[PARA] Approximately 5,600 people in the U.S. are diagnosed with ALS each year. The incidence of ALS (two per 100,000 people) is five times higher than Huntington's disease and about equal to multiple sclerosis. ALS can affect anyone.