

STORIES OF HOPE

LIVING UP TO A HEALTHY CHALLENGE



Steve Thurner

At age 38 and weighing over 300 pounds, Steve Thurner was taking five pills and two injections a day for type 2 diabetes. His physician gave him a choice: take more medication or start exercising.

Thurner, a computer programmer in San Diego, opted for exercise. He recalled seeing an ad for the American Diabetes Association's local Tour de Cure® but was disappointed to learn that the biking event was only a week away in, May 2009.

"I was not ready for even a 10-miler," he recalls. "But it stuck in my head."

That fall, when Thurner signed up for the Association's Step Out: Walk to Stop Diabetes®, he devised a link to the 2010 Tour de Cure and its four routes ranging from 10 to 100 miles.

"I already knew that I wanted to participate in the Tour, so I made the commitment to ride a distance based on the funds my team and I raised for Step Out." Something about his offer inspired people. Family and friends pledged, then spread the word to help Thurner set a lofty goal.

"I didn't even know some of the people who donated," Thurner says. "As the numbers rolled in, it really made a change in me. I wanted to reach the goal of 100 miles, even with no understanding of what I was taking on."

His team's total of \$2,643 – five times his previous high – committed Thurner to the 100-mile route.

Thurner started training in October and struggled to make it 10 miles on his hilly first ride. He grew stronger and added miles, joining other entrants on training rides of 20 to 70 miles. By April 2010, he was averaging 120 miles per week. He completed his first "century" ride in the Tour de Cure.

"The ride was fantastic – probably one of the biggest accomplishments of my life. I was very emotional by the end," Thurner says. "Six months earlier, I never would have thought that I could actually complete it. It was really empowering."

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He felt proud to wear a Red Rider jersey, given to all Tour de Cure participants with diabetes to recognize their courage to live every day with the disease, and to raise \$2,063 for the Association. He also had lost 30 pounds and lowered his average blood glucose to the recommended level while discovering a physical activity that doubles as a getaway.

A few months later, Thurner's wife, Heather, gave birth to a bundle of motivation named Charlene.

"The decision to have a family is driving me," Thurner says. "I want Charlene to learn good habits around eating and exercise."

All she has to do is watch her daddy, who continues to participate in Step Out and Tour de Cure in San Diego and now helps organize both events. ▲