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Cycle ride aims to raise funds for Children's Medical Research Institute

By NICOLE CAIRNS
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Major effort: Charlie Haggett, 7, will ride in the Great Cycle Challenge. PICTURE: JUSTIN WHITELOCK

CHARLIE Haggett will ride his bike as much as he can to help other children with leukaemia.

The seven-year-old Ballarat boy was diagnosed with acute lymphoblastic leukaemia when he was almost three and is now in remission.

He is due to be declared cancer-free when he is 10.

Charlie and his team aim to raise \$250,000 for cancer research as part of the Great Cycle Challenge.

His team has already raised more than \$82,000, with Charlie raising about \$4000 on his own.

About 200 people have already signed up to his team.

The Great Cycle Challenge is a national fund-raising initiative for the Children's Medical Research Institute.

Children and adults can sign up for free and be sponsored to ride their bikes as much as they can during October.

Charlie only learnt to ride his bike without training wheels a few months ago. Although still needing a hand to push off and stop, he is aiming to ride 20 kilometres with the rest of his family.

Ballarat Bicycle Centre gave him a new bike for his seventh birthday on September 4 to help him train and raise money for the event.

The Haggett family moved to Ballarat at the start of the year, after living in Tamworth and spending a lot of time in Sydney's hospitals.

In the 1960s, the survival rate for children with leukaemia was less than 10 per cent. This improved to a survival rate of 83 per cent in 1990 and in 2014 is 90 per cent.

"Mrs Haggett said she had lost two friends to leukaemia by the time she turned 18.

"So when Charlie was diagnosed, I thought it was a death sentence.

"There's already been a lot of change in 20 years thanks to the great work of the CMRI."

Mrs Haggett said after Charlie was first diagnosed, he had to be treated straight away to ensure his survival.

"He's a different child now. He was so angry when he was younger. Now he's a lot happier."

They hope to sign up 500 people to the Charlie Power team.

Great Cycle Challenge event manager Greg Johnson said Charlie had been such an inspiration for the challenge community, with people from as far as Perth and Townsville joining his efforts to raise vital funds for cancer research.

Charlie and his mum will be on Sunrise on Thursday morning to talk about the event.

To register, visit greatcyclechallenge.com.au or to sign up to Charlie Power visit greatcyclechallenge.com.au/Pages/the-kids/charlie-haggett

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