

Neighbors

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ON THE COVER: Christian Bruce, a second-grader at Stonewall Jackson Elementary, takes a shot at the goal for his FC Texas Soccer Team March 19 at the Blue Sky soccer fields in The Colony. The M Streets kid scored the first goal of the game from this mid-field shot. For the look of grit and determination on Christian's face, this photo captured the first-ever *Neighbors* Action Sports Photo Contest. THERE ARE MORE FANTASTIC PHOTOS OF KIDS IN THE WHITE ROCK AREA GIVING IT THEIR ALL IN YOUTH SPORTS ON PAGES 7-10.

SUBMITTED PHOTO BY GORDON BRUCE

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Neighbors IN THE SPOTLIGHT



SUBMITTED PHOTO

RIDING FOR RESEARCH: Andy Watkins and the founders of the CitiSlickers MS150 cycling team: Elizabeth Schopmeyer, Jana Dimmine and Julie Grimm. Watkins will participate in the Sam's Club MS150 Saturday, May 6, to raise funds for MS research.

Lakewood resident rides to find a cure for MS

By LINDA HALE BUCHANAN

Longtime Lakewood resident Andy Watkins had been riding bikes recreationally for a year or so when fate seated him next to Elizabeth Schopmeyer at a cycling club meeting in 2004.

Schopmeyer introduced herself to Watkins and asked if he knew anyone with multiple sclerosis. In fact, he did — a former coworker's husband who had become his friend. Schopmeyer invited Watkins to join her cycling club, CitiSlickers, formed to participate in a ride to raise money to find a cure for the disease. Watkins was happy to accept.

It was only after he committed that he learned the ride was 150 miles.

"I had never ridden more than 40 miles before," Watkins said. But in agreeing to do something he thought would help a friend, Watkins found a way to have fun,

stay fit and fundraise for a worthy cause.

When he contacted friends to ask if they would sponsor him, he started by asking what Schopmeyer, herself diagnosed with MS, had asked him — did they know anyone with multiple sclerosis? They did, and the pledges came rolling in.

Watkins found many friends had relatives and friends struggling with the disease and had each one sign an MS150 bandanna. Last May, on one of the legs of the ride, Watkins, 53, sported a bandanna with the name Shannon Taylor, a friend's cousin with MS in Houston.

This year, Watkins will ride for Taylor again, but now Taylor, a musician, has also joined the cause. He has donated copies of his latest CD, *If It Is To Be As It Is*, for sale to benefit the National Multiple Sclerosis Society.

"We'll have the CD available

for purchase at the race and also at our June 4 fundraiser at Memphis Bar in Addison — Four Bands Four Hours," Schopmeyer said.

Last year, CitiSlickers put 34 riders in the race and raised more than \$33,000. This year the group will have 50 cyclists and hopes to raise significantly more.

The Sam's Club MS150 will begin at 7 a.m. Saturday, May 6, at Rough Rider Stadium in Frisco, traveling 80 miles to the Texas Motor Speedway and then 70 more the following morning to arrive in Fort Worth's Sundance Square in the early afternoon.

Look for Watkins there — he'll be the one crossing the finish line with a stick-horse head attached to his handlebars and wearing a red bandanna to salute a friend with MS.

Linda Hale Buchanan is a Lakewood resident.