



Lifelong diehard Yankees fan Rob Rothschild of East Meadow proudly displays the Yankees logo along with radio broadcaster Michael Kay's signature home run call "Seeya!" It also sends a message to those in the cars behind him (especially Mets fans). Rob says he is "hoping for many more home run calls as the Yankees enter the season's second half."

If you have a creative license, send us a note about what inspired it, along with a photo of the plate, and maybe we'll use it in an upcoming LI Life. E-mail your name, phone number, hometown and the photo to iris.quigley@newsday.com or mail them to Iris Quigley, Library, Newsday, 235 Pinelawn Rd., Melville, NY 11747-4250.



FLORIDA TO LONG ISLAND

Biking for Angela's House

BY LAURA RIVERA

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Last July, Bill Iaia and Jay D'Agostino left Chicago on road bikes carrying little more than the backpacks of water on their backs.

During nine days of a record-breaking heat wave, they trekked 1,000 miles to Centereach, where they were cheered by a throng of thankful friends and parents.

The stunt was a first for D'Agostino, 39, whose longest bike ride had consisted of a 50-mile stretch from Patchogue to the Hamptons. But he considered his own sacrifice small next to that of the hundreds of families that depend on Angela's House, an organization that helps children with severe health problems.

Exhausted but exuberant, the pair raised almost \$8,000 for the children, mostly through raffles.

"I didn't think he was going to say yes this year," D'Agostino said, referring to Iaia, 49, his cycling partner. "I told him I was thinking of something small. He suggested California."

They settled on Jacksonville, Fla., 1,004 miles away, as a starting point.

D'Agostino, a medical equipment salesman from Centereach, first visited Angela's House in 2005. While training caretakers to use his company's devices, he met its founder, Bob Policastro, and learned his heartbreaking story.



NEWSDAY PHOTO / JIM PEPLER

Bill Iaia of Patchogue and Jay D'Agostino of Centereach train for their 1,004-mile fundraiser.

See CYCLISTS on G4

A 1,004-mile bike trip benefits Angela's House

BR LI LIFE

CYCLISTS from G2

After Policastro's 1-year-old daughter, Angela, died of a series of serious medical conditions in 1990, he and his wife, Angie, fought for state funding for a place where families could take children who need 24-hour nursing to help them survive.

Ten years later, the first Angela's House opened in East Moriches, a two-story house with skylights, murals and a playground; a second home opened in Smithtown in 2005. Fifteen children live at the sites, but the organization also helps to get costly equipment and home care for about 300 children in Long Island.

Policastro's dedication so moved D'Agostino that he enlisted his buddy Iaia, a former triathlete, to help him plan a bike ride to raise funds for Angela's House.

While the state covers the cost of the houses and the nursing staff, Angela's House needs extra money to help the families pay for special strollers, protective gear and services not covered by Medicare or insurance.

"We've never had a fundraiser like this," Policastro said. "They do this with a



NEWSDAY PHOTOS / JIM PEPLER

Jay D'Agostino and Bill Iaia had to fix flats 19 times during their 2006 bike trip for Angela's House.

miniature backpack on their backs and that's it. That part makes it even more special."

Traveling light

D'Agostino, a self-described gym rat, balked when Iaia, who lives in Patchogue, told him what to pack: a toothbrush, photo ID, a credit card, flip-flops, gym shorts and a T-shirt

— "dress clothes" for dinner outings.

The extra-light load let them log an average of 111 miles a day, far more than even professional triathletes ride, Iaia said. By 6 a.m., they hit the road, pedaling along old state highways and stopping often to eat fast food and fill their bags with as

much as five gallons of water a day.

Frequent breakdowns

Besides fixing 19 flat tires and braving 10-hour days in 100-degree weather, D'Agostino said low points of last year's trip included falling on a hill during a rainstorm in Pennsylvania and riding over a traffic-choked

George Washington Bridge.

This year, they leave Jacksonville next Saturday. They're raising funds through raffles again, plus a \$7,000 pledge from Double R Contracting.

D'Agostino said they plotted their stops along the trail, found a sponsor to pay for their riding outfits and travel expenses, and secured police escorts from the George Washington Bridge to McCarthy's Pub in Centereach, which they hope to reach on July 28.

"For the families to know that the community is behind them is such a wonderful, wonderful feeling," said Policastro, who will host a blog with daily updates of the journey at angelashouse.org, under the "current affairs" banner.

D'Agostino said they could probably raise money without riding 1,000 miles but that a feat like this spurs awareness of the needs of children with serious medical problems.

"If I just rode from the Hamptons and back, nobody cares about that," he said. "When you say you're riding from Florida, people get excited."

To donate to Angela's House, write: ATDC/Angela's House, PO Box 5052, Hauppauge, NY 11788.