

Karen Lang: Pedaling for women

By **BARBARA PIERCE, SUN CORRESPONDENT**

Karen Lang will lead a bicycle ride for Project Cure on Saturday. The money raised will go to the Charlotte County Health Department to fund mammograms.

Lang is dedicated to fighting cancer because she's lost both family and friends to the disease. Last year, she had a melanoma — the leading cause of death from skin disease — removed.

"My own experience makes me promote this ride even more," Lang said.

There is no fee for the ride, only donations. Riders will ride whatever distance they can, leaving from Acme Bicycle in Punta Gorda at 8:30 a.m. Saturday.

Another of Lang's major projects is an annual spring bike ride for women.

"Men always have rides; no one put rides out there for women," she said by way of explaining why she initiated Wheelin' Women. Starting at a point 400 miles away, they ride 50-80 miles a day.

"We don't 'rough it.' At night we choose motels with pools, hot tubs and wine," she said and laughed.

Lang has become a leader in the bicycling community since she arrived in Southwest Florida six years ago.

Karen and Earl Lang arrived by water, dropping the anchor of their boat in Charlotte Harbor. On his bike, Earl Lang rode into Punta Gorda for supplies. He stopped at a local bicycle shop to get a part for his bike. The owner had just lost her husband; the Langs stayed on to help her. They eventually purchased the shop, renamed it Acme Bicycle, and added a second shop in Port Charlotte.

When they dropped anchor in Charlotte Harbor, they had been cruising on their sailboat for nearly four years. They had retired from jobs in Ohio to live and travel on their boat, cruising the Bahamas, the Turks and Caicos, and the Dry Tortugas.

Lang went from living the retirement lifestyle on a boat to being a bicycle enthusiastic and business owner.

When she met Earl she was a dispatcher, working for the police department in Huber Heights, Ohio. Earl had a sailboat he was planning to sail off all by himself.

As the time for his departure got closer, Lang made the decision to join him. They married, and sailed off together. Her decision came as she realized that many people work all their lives and never get to retire and enjoy life.

"If you wait for 'some day,' it may never come," she said. "We retired and had a great time. Now we're back at work. I'd make the same decision again."

Lang has two children, and two grandsons in Ohio. Visits to and from them, she said, are the most important thing to her when she's not riding.



Karen Lang will lead a bicycle ride for Project Cure this Saturday starting at Acme Bicycle in Punta Gorda.