

HEALTHYPARTNERS

Jim Elick, Healthy Partner, Reliability Engineer, Savannah

Jim Elick, Reliability Engineer II at the Research and Development Center in Savannah, never turns down a challenge. "If you say I can't do it, you're done," he declares. Having waged a battle with high cholesterol and sky-high triglycerides for much of his life, Jim takes his health seriously. He knows the benefits of physical activity and makes sure it's an integral part of his lifestyle.



Over the years, Jim has learned a lot about nutrition and exercise and gained great awareness of their effects on his own body. He realized that muscle strength peaks in a person's late twenties and declines steadily after that. Jim asserts with a broad smile, "Lose a half a pound of muscle a year for the rest of my life? Not on my watch!" As he entered middle age in 1996, he decided to do something about his physical fitness.

Jim tried cycling, rightly believing that it would provide a cardiovascular workout that was low impact but still challenging and fun. He started out with a mountain bike and loved it. He was living in Atlanta at the time, and those red clay hills made his legs and heart work harder. Soon he bought a road bike, met a local group of cyclists and joined them on a 100-mile "century" ride. Prior to this, the farthest Jim had ever ridden was 30

miles. True to his competitive nature, he gave it his all, but the distance, intense heat, hilly terrain, and poor technique were just too much. Jim made another decision - this would never happen again. Nearly 24,000 miles later, it never has.

Thirteen years later, Jim is as active and physically fit as ever. He rides 75 to 100 miles a week, including a long ride on Saturdays. He credits consistent cycling with mitigating the effects his cholesterol problem has had on his overall cardiovascular health. At age 51, he feels great. "I have the metabolism of a speed bump," Jim quips, "but cycling keeps me fit and vital."

Most rewarding perhaps are the numerous friends he's made through cycling and the countless ways it has enhanced his life. He and his wife, Sabrina, have been spectators at the Tour de France and he has served as a Marshall for the Tour De Georgia. As the Founder of Habitat for Humanity's "Ride for Rafters," he still organizes local rides today.

The lesson for the rest of us? Find an activity you enjoy, make it an integral part of your life, and allow your life to be enriched by it. The health benefits you receive are just an added bonus.