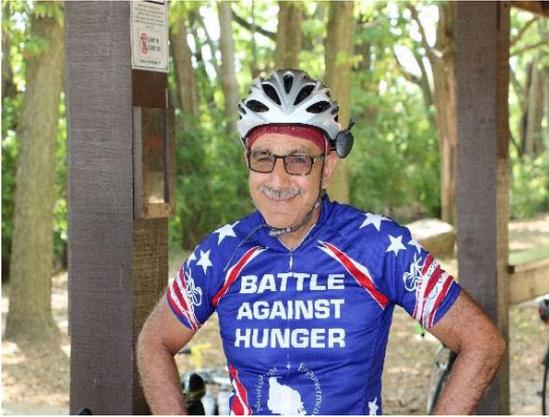


2017-01 Member in Focus: Bill Babakian



I started riding two and a half years ago to try to keep up with a woman I was dating. This woman, now my partner, worked Monday through Friday and rode Saturdays and Sundays. I could have waited for rainy weekends, but instead I bought a bike. I had never been athletic, but it was worth a try.

Much to my surprise I really enjoyed cycling. I had found my sport. In hindsight, it makes a certain sense. I had the time. Actually, I had too much time. My transition to retirement a few years earlier had not gone smoothly. My wife died and my children spread their wings and left the nest. The house was too empty. There were too many hours in the day.

I joined Team Social Security, led ably by Dennis Whitney and Al Porter, for weekday rides. Here was a group of men who knew a good deal about cycling. They also knew about retirement and life. Two of the older members of TSS, Spence Halper and Dan Zorovich, turned 83 this past August. They organized an 83-mile ride for the group. These are men I admire and learn from.

Since I retired I somehow lost the ability to sit quietly doing nothing, a significant loss for a Buddhist who had previously enjoyed meditation. It took me a while to realize, that cycling is now my meditation. Cycling has had other benefits. My doctor loves what the cycling has done for my cholesterol levels. I love that controlling my weight is no longer so difficult.

Cycling has helped me support causes I value. This Fall we helped raise over \$50,000 on the Battle Against Hunger Ride.

There's a simple pleasure in watching yourself improve. The first time I got on my bike I lasted for ten minutes. I've completed a couple of centuries now and look forward to more. I'm learning new skills on non-biking days as well. I volunteer two days each week working with cancer patients at a hospital. I've been a senior auditor at Rutgers University for five semesters now. The undergraduates sometimes confuse me with the visiting professors. I just smile.

If you ride on weekends out of Cranbury, Etra Park, Lambertville, or the Sourlands, you've probably seen Lynne and me riding. I've meet really wonderful people on a bike. A few times recently Lynne has complained that I'm riding too far ahead. She's talking about retiring this summer. She wants more hours on the bike. Something about trying to keep up.