

SUP 4ms

STORY: SARAH DANN

We are huge fans of Stand Up Paddleboarding but were wowed when we heard about this epic ride that two surf enthusiasts took from Hamilton to Toronto to raise money in the fight against MS. They're at it again this year so we thought we'd tune you in.



MAKING WAVES 4 MS - SUP FROM HAMILTON TO TORONTO

Typically when people go out on a Stand Up Paddleboard better known as SUP, they "paddle around for an hour or two," says Mike Sandusky, founder of Surf Ontario. So when Mike decided to SUP the 65 km from Hamilton to Toronto to raise money for Multiple Sclerosis, this was no small goal.

However, that winter, Mike's sister, Angela, had been diagnosed with MS. Mike wanted to do something. Angela was instrumental in introducing Mike to SUP when she encouraged him to travel to Hawaii a few years earlier. So, his thoughts turned to his first love - surfing. Mike, a personal trainer as well as a Surf enthusiast and instructor, had been training distance swimmer Colleen Shields the summer before Angela's diagnosis. Colleen was training to swim across Lake Ontario from Niagara Falls to Toronto and it got Mike thinking that he could connect the bays between Hamilton and Toronto on an SUP. He told his partner at Surf Ontario, Grant Kennedy his idea and right away Grant said he'd join him for the ride.

With that, not only the bays but the people were connected and Mike and Grant started fundraising and training for the epic ride. Stand Up Paddleboarding depends a good deal on wind and weather so a window was set within which they would depart. Mike chose August for the ride since the winds were more likely to cooperate and on August 7th they woke

up at 4a.m to a perfect-looking day with a south-west wind that would be at their backs to help them along. A friend drove them to Hamilton and with only small packs on their backs with food and drinks for the day, they were on their way.

"When you do that distance, you get a totally different perspective of the lake," Grant says of the day. "We passed beautiful homes and waterfront, factories where they were loading product." The day started off perfectly but mid-day the wind changed so they were now facing a head and side wind. "It was horrible," Grant says, "There were good moments but there were moments when I thought we wouldn't make it." But they did make it and when they came into the home stretch around Toronto Island, the wind changed again and gave them lovely waves to play with as they came home. It had taken them nearly 14 hours and they raised \$7000!

This year, they're at it again but this time, there will be 11 paddlers. The window is set for August 5 to 8 and you can contribute or find out more by visiting sup4ms.com. Try SUP! It's a fast-growing sport that anyone can enjoy and benefit from. As Mike says, "it uses all the muscles between your toes and your fingers and improves your general body balance and your overall posture and strength." Not to mention that it's fun to be out on the water and to get a new perspective on the city.



LEFT: STARTING OUT AT SUNRISE; ABOVE LEFT AND RIGHT: MIKE AND GRANT RIDE THE WAVES IN TO FINISH OFF THE RIDE; RIGHT: REFLECTING ON THEIR ACCOMPLISHMENT; TOP: WITH THEIR INSPIRATION :)