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Bike, Run Or Walk To Fight Epilepsy

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The Epilepsy Foundation's Jan. 26 event includes bikers, runners and walkers. Photo from Epilepsy Foundation Hawaii

The Epilepsy Foundation of Hawaii presents Sharon's Ride, Run and Walk Jan. 26 at Diamond Head, starting at 7 a.m.

The family-friendly event features a bike ride (there's a 100km, 75km or 35km course), a kid's bike obstacle course (at 10:30 a.m.), a 10K and 5K run (starting at 7:30 a.m.), and a one-mile walk (at 8:30 a.m.).

One of the unique features of the event is the run which goes into Diamond Head Crater. Among those who will be on the scenic 5K course is Honolulu lawyer Ed Kemper, who serves on the board of the Epilepsy Foundation and has been volunteering for the organization for about the past 15 years.

"A good friend of mine, who did have epilepsy and still does, was very concerned about the foundation, and asked myself and others to help," says Kemper to explain his involvement. "He was very concerned about whether or not the foundation would flounder. He made a strong case that they needed help, and he was going to lead the charge, so I volunteered and I have been ever since in various capacities."

Sharon's Ride, Run and Walk for Epilepsy welcomes runners and bikers of all ages and skill levels – from elite runners to people who simply want to support the organization and walk. Trophies will be awarded to the top male and female finisher, as well as the top three finishers in each age group.

Kemper, who lists himself in the "senior" age group, started running about 20 years ago after signing up for the

Great Aloha Run with some friends. He didn't train, and recalls barely being able to walk after mile six. But he didn't give up and continued on to the finish. Since then, he's run in almost every Great Aloha Run and is signed up for the next one coming up on President's Day.

These days you'll likely see him running through the streets from Honolulu Club to Ala Moana or Waikiki, totaling about 20 miles a week. He also enjoys competing in various 5K and 10K races. The Epilepsy Foundation of Hawaii also has another running event called the Freedom Run which takes place on the Fourth of July in Kailua.

"Since I started running, I've maintained my health," says Kemper, who also is a well-known car enthusiast. "I feel very fit. I look forward to running because I think it clears my mind from the day's work, and I just generally feel better."

According to the Epilepsy Foundation of Hawaii, it is estimated that more than 15,000 Hawaii residents suffer from epilepsy, and more than 75,000 people are touched by it.

"I've seen epilepsy dramatically affect people where they literally faint and need time to recover, so it's not something to be taken lightly," says Kemper. "It's a condition of the brain that affects the nerves, and it can cause people to have seizures at various levels from complete fainting to momentary lapses, so it's a broad spectrum and it can be extremely debilitating. It affects people of all ages, all genders, anybody."

All proceeds collected locally from the event will go to the Epilepsy Foundation of Hawaii, a nonprofit organization dedicated to providing services to individuals with seizure disorders.

For more information, visit EpilepsyHawaii.org or call 528-3058.

yting@midweek.com