

Why I Ride: Debbie Dal Bello-Conn

Many young children are afraid of the dark. But for my daughter Makayla, who was four years old at the time, I sensed there was something greater behind her fear.

At home, I noticed that she wouldn't walk to the bathroom if the light was off — and she didn't like walking up or down dimly lit stairwells. She would often stumble or fall.

I took Makayla to the optometrist and she was diagnosed with a stigmatism and farsightedness. Even with glasses, she still struggled. Eventually, we were referred to an ophthalmologist for more in-depth testing.

That's when our lives took a drastic turn. Makayla was diagnosed with retinitis pigmentosa (RP) — an eye disease that would slowly take away her vision.



Things got even worse when I was told there was no cure for the disease. My daughter was going blind and I was helpless to stop it!

It's heartbreaking to watch as one of your children goes blind. Imagine how I felt when **I learned my youngest daughter Dalaynie had retinitis pigmentosa as well.**

While I've always tried to stay positive, the emotional and psychological pressures of dealing with the disease make it difficult — especially when you're told that no treatment exists today.

In Canada, more than 1.5 million people live with eye diseases — people like Makayla and Dalaynie. Every day they wake up hoping that there will be a breakthrough.

But we are in incredibly exciting times! New therapies are closer than ever to becoming real treatments.



**FIGHTING
BLINDNESS
CANADA**

In the case of Luxturna, an innovative gene therapy treatment that targets eye diseases caused by gene mutations, the results have been extremely promising. **Luxturna has been shown to stop further vision loss and even restore some functional vision.** Now that is something to celebrate!

While my daughters face vision loss now, I have hope that they will completely regain their sight in the future with the help of Cycle for Sight and Fighting Blindness Canada.

Fighting Blindness Canada is the country's leading private funder of vision research, and we urgently need you to help continue the fight against blindness.



My family has participated in Cycle for Sight five times, and now more than ever, we are looking forward to this year's event! Like many of you, we need something to look forward to and do together this spring.

Although they continue to lose their sight, they are still pretty typical teenaged girls. Makayla had been preparing to perform in her last high school play, go to prom and graduation, and then go on a mission trip to Ecuador. And Dalaynie was excited to graduate from

Grade 8, go on her grad trip as well as participate in her gymnastics and track & field meets. But then COVID-19 arrived and all these activities were just no longer possible.

This is why we are so very grateful to have Cycle for Sight Virtual 2020 to look forward to on June 20th!

While my daughters face vision loss now, I have hope that they will regain their sight in the future. So, thank you for considering your participation again this year in another fun and meaningful Cycle for Sight program. **Together we can give so many people, including my daughters, a brighter future — with sight!**