



**By Tim O'Keefe**

Get ready to stretch your quads, strap on a helmet, and hit the streets, as the 8th Annual George Street Bike Challenge kicks off this Sunday at 10 a.m.

"We've grown every year," says Lynne Tolman, co-organizer for the Challenge. "In 2002 we had 50 riders, last year we had 144 riders, and this year we hope to have just as many."

Bikers willing to face the mammoth hill on George Street will compete to see who can make it up the 500-foot juggernaut the quickest.

"It's quite a spectacle to see," says Tolman. "This year we have a number of tandem bikes competing, as well as a triplet bike. It should be quite a show."

"I have raced George Street many times and love the local cycling scene," says Scott Dolmat-Connell, a competitive category 2 racer from Princeton. "I did the first George Street Challenge in 2002 as a junior rider, placing second in my age category and fifth overall as a 15-year-old. Now, I'm 22 and George Street still holds both challenge and excitement for me."

This year Dolmat-Connell is looking to take home the gold and end his streak of finishing in second place.

"In 2003, the second year of the race, I improved my time and placed second overall. Then I placed second overall in 2005 and second again in 2008," he says. "I have never finished higher than second place, and this is the year that I break the string of seconds."

Participants taking on this daunting task look forward to honoring Major Taylor, Worcester's world champion cyclist who used George Street as his practice ground and was the king of the hill for many years.

"It's the kind of hill that stands up and laughs at you," Tolman quips.

The proceeds from the event, presented by Seven Hills Wheelman and Barney's Bicycle Shop, will benefit the Major Taylor Association here in the city.

"We are a non-profit organization based in Worcester, whose goals were to establish a memorial for Major Taylor as well as to educate the public on his life and legacy," says Tolman, a board member for the Major Taylor Association. "We already accomplished the first goal by having a statue put up of Major Taylor at the public library."

With an entry fee of \$15, spectators and participants can also enter a raffle to win various prizes, including a new bike, compliments of Barney's Bicycle Shop on Chandler Street.

"The local support and fans really make this race special," says Dolmat-Connell, "and when you conquer gravity through your own power, that's a special thing."