

When life throws you a curve ball, ride with it, girl



FREEDOM: Marie Fox and Donna Handley hit the road. Picture: LEE BESFORD

By DANIELLE TEUTSCH

ROLL with life's twists and turns, say Marie Fox, 45, and Donna Handley, 38.

The women are preparing to roar alongside the Californian coastline on Harley-Davidson motorcycles in October, following the famed Highway 1 with a group of young breast cancer survivors.

On the way, they will appear on the television shows of Oprah Winfrey, Dr Phil and Jay Leno, and a documentary maker will film their progress as they snake their way up the coastal road from San Diego to San Francisco.

The ride, called Changing Gears, is organised by Amazon Heart, an international breast cancer support group. Five Australian and 15 American

women are going on the week-long ride.

Ms Fox and Mrs Handley, both of Sydney, say they would never have learnt to master a motorbike if cancer had not turned their lives upside down.

Their priorities changed following diagnosis of the disease three years ago. Both women decided to pare down their overloaded schedules and spend more time nurturing themselves.

Having always had a yen for motorcycle riding, it was now or never, they decided.

"I enrolled in the RIA motorcycle course. I think I was the oldest one there," Ms Fox said. "But I passed first go."

Mrs Handley, after years riding pillion on her husband's bike, decided she wanted to be the one controlling the revs.

She started on a Honda 250cc, and within six months upgraded to a 750cc.

Not surprisingly, the classmates of her sons Dylan, 13, and Liam, 9, think she is "cool" for a mum.

Ms Fox said the inaugural Changing Gears ride would raise money for the McGrath Breast Cancer Foundation, formed by Jane and Glenn McGrath, and show there was life after breast cancer - and that "there are lots of other women to share the journey with you".

"I enjoy the speed and the freedom of riding a bike," Ms Fox said. "You feel like a bit of a warrior."

■ Amazon Heart is seeking sponsors for the riders. For inquiries, phone Meredith Campbell: 0412 653 202 or email info@amazon-heart.com.