

Riding for a Cause

Bicyclist team raises money during annual bike ride across Iowa.

By Cayla Gorsh

After sixteen years without ever knowing what it was like to ride a bike, that finally changed for a young teenage boy during the annual week long summer bike ride across Iowa, also known as RAGBRAI.

Carter Sigler, a sixteen year old boy from Blue Grass, Iowa who was born with cerebral palsy and cannot walk was given the opportunity to ride along with a bicyclist team known as “Team Azz Hurts”. This team of 12 bicyclists rides with a purpose. To tackle the long seven day ride across Iowa and raise money for charities such as Honor Flight which raises money for World War II veterans to attend Washington D.C. and other causes, such as the one with Sigler.

“I never would have guessed I would get to experience something like this,” Sigler said. “The bike ride was awesome and so much fun.”

Out of the group of 12 riders, Aaron Wilson, 45, from Tucson Arizona is the founder of the team, known by his fellow teammates as “Chief No Wind” because he tends to bow out on riding when there is any sort of wind conditions that are above normal. When Wilson is not working as an Associate Broker for Keller Williams Southern Arizona, he is busy working with his RAGBRAI team. Wilson leads the team on and is on a mission to make people’s lives better by raising money through the RAGBRAI ride.

This summer's ride was a success for Aaron and his team. His team raised more than \$70,000 for Honor Flight and also made the ride special for Sigler by creating a special bicycle chariot that Wilson came up with so Carter could ride along.

"Carter is my inspiration to ride RAGBRAI," Wilson said. "Giving him an opportunity to actually get out of his wheelchair and into a device that is intended for enjoyment is a wonderful thing and I would love for him to ride more often if possible."

Wilson talked about the bicycle chariot and how they got the money to create it.

"The chariot was actually funded by the Arizona Cardinals football team and there was a grant program that the team had available," Wilson said. "When we knew we were granted the funds, we sent it directly to a company in Washington that designed the bicycle chariot."

Wilson was so happy with what the company created.

"The custom chair has some great features for both the rider and the cyclist and I couldn't have been more proud of what the company produced when we saw the final results of the product."

When Carter found out about the bicycle chariot he was beyond excited, Wilson said. With the help from his daughter, they strategically placed the chariot outside of his cycling trailer. He face-timed Carter over the phone and had "small talk" at first, also explaining to him how the power of teams can do amazing things. Finally Wilson moved the camera over to where the chariot was and that's when Carter's face lit up.

"Carter's reaction was heart wrenching and you could see him holding back emotions initially, however it became a little too overwhelming for him and he began to get choked up," Wilson said. "It was very heartwarming to know how much he appreciated it."

The team was only able to ride for 20 miles instead of the 62 miles that were planned due to stormy weather. Even though the weather didn't cooperate, Sigler still had a blast.

"It was a really cool experience," Sigler said. "It would have been better if the weather wouldn't have been bad but I still had a great time and Aaron did a great job pulling me behind him in the chariot and I really hope I will get to do it again next summer."

Another member from the RAGBRAI team, Tom Heath talked about Aaron as a leader for their team.

"He sets up 90% of our accommodations each trip. He organizes the registration process, orders the jerseys, figures out transportation, and makes sure we are all accounted for each day," he said. "He gets help from all of us, but he is clearly the one making sure things happen. Without his leadership, we would not be a team and many of us may not be riding."

Not only did Carter get to experience his first bike ride, but he also got his own nickname from the team.

"We were rolling into town and heard a shout from a woman cheering the riders and one yelled 'Great Job Carter' and Aaron asked Carter who it was and Carter said 'I don't know, I got women everywhere,'" Heath said. "It was at that moment his nickname 'Playa' was born."

Sources:

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