Learning to Ride a Bike - Something Uniquely Special

Learning to ride a bike is such a rite of passage. When you are too young to ride, lacking the skills or maturity for the task, you yearn for the chance to learn - wanting the freedom to go where you please - like “the big kids.” For most young people, riding a bike provides them with their first taste of independence, but for many of our young people, it provides one of the first obstacles. I wanted my son to be able to ride a bike. I wanted him to be able to feel that freedom, but nothing we were doing at home or in therapy was helping him to attain that goal.

Then I read about a program that was to be offered in Syracuse. They claimed that with their help and their adapted equipment, they could teach people with all kinds of disabilities to ride a bike in five days. iCan Shine (formerly, Lose The Training Wheels) collaborates with local organizations (hosts), to conduct almost 100 iCan Shine bike programs each year around the country - enabling thousands of individuals to learn to ride a bike.

Approximately 80% of the people who participate in the iCan Shine bike program ride a two-wheel bicycle independently by the end of the five-day program while attending for only 75 minutes each day! The remaining 20% make tremendous progress towards this goal and (continued page 3)

iCan Shine Bike Program - Coming in Summer 2015!

After having seen this program and how well it works, Trisomy 21 is hoping to spearhead a campaign to bring the iCanShine bike program to Watertown for the summer of 2015. This will not be possible without two things: the financial support of many sponsors and the commitment of many volunteers.

We are looking for businessses, organizations, and individuals who would be willing to sponsor a biker or sponsor the program. We also need volunteers to work with bike riders (continued page 2)
The Buddy Walk is always a great family event. We have the Thompson Park pavilion in Watertown reserved again this year and are looking into different options for food and activities to entertain the whole family.

Although actual activities for this event have not been finalized, we do plan to introduce a new long-sleeved shirt design at this year’s event. Youth sizes will be available for $15 while adult sizes (up to 4XL) will be sold for $20.

Registration will begin at 10:00 a.m. with the walk at 11:00, and lunch immediately following.

We hope that you and your family and friends will join us for the afternoon.

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If you would like to find out more about their program, please check out their website at iCanShine.org.

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(continued from page 1) throughout the day for a one week period of time. Church groups, sport teams and business groups are encouraged to pick a time slot to volunteer each of the 5 days, or pick one whole day within the week to volunteer. If you know of an individual who would be interested in learning to ride, or a group willing to sponsor or volunteer for the event, please contact me as soon as possible. We are beginning to coordinate the event and we will need all the help we can get!

If you can help, please call 315-783-5492.
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leave our programs accompanied by parents and/or siblings trained as ‘spotters’ to pick up where the training leaves off!

I was skeptical of the program’s claim when I registered my son. I was hoping the daily drive to Syracuse would be worth our time, money, and effort. After the first 5 minutes, I knew we were involved in something uniquely special. Watching a gym full of volunteers and children with various disabilities embark on a systematic method to learn a lifelong, life changing skill was exciting and more emotional than I had anticipated.

When I was asked to become a volunteer and work with a 17 year old female, I initially declined, thinking I would not be able to keep up with the physical demands of helping someone learn to ride a bike. I was assured I had all the skills needed to be a volunteer.. . .enthusiasm, and a desire to help. After the first five minutes, I knew I was doing something uniquely special.

At the end of the first session, the young woman I had been working with looked down and suddenly realized that I was no longer touching the bike to keep her upright while she pedaled. She immediately asked me, with a touch of panic in her voice, if I was still holding on (even though she knew the answer). When I told her I was not holding her anymore, she started yelling, "I can fly! Look at me, I'm flying!" She finished her lap, got off the bike, and cried, telling me she never thought she would do this and she kept repeating, "I'm free!" After the first session, she knew this was something uniquely special.

On the last day of the program, I was approached by a woman who pointed to my son and asked if he was mine. I told her yes. She then pointed out her son; the young man in his late twenties who was helping my son to learn to ride. She explained that he was not initially signed up to be a volunteer, but on the first day of the program, he had just finished working out at the YMCA, (which was adjacent to where the iCanShine bike program was being held). After his workout, one of the organizers approached him and asked him if he would be willing to help out for one day because they were short a few volunteers. He agreed and was assigned to my son. His mother went on to tell me that after that first day, her son was hooked, and he had returned every day afterward to volunteer. She said that he had had such enthusiasm in his voice when he explained to her what he was doing, that she had come just to watch. She then thanked me for giving him the opportunity to help in a way she had never imagined. She was filled with pride at seeing what her son was doing. She knew it was something uniquely special.

Needless to say, the five days spent going back and forth to Syracuse was totally worth it. The iCanShine program taught my son how to ride a bike, but more than that, it taught us both not to let obstacles stand in our way. The enthusiasm, satisfaction, and feeling of accomplishment for both the bikers and volunteers is priceless! It is something uniquely special.
What is new at Beaver Camp this year? I’m glad you asked! This year we’re adding a little music to our Friday night campfire, we’re planning a hay ride for Saturday night, and we’re hosting our first ever ShenanOlympics on Sunday! This, combined with swimming, boating, fishing, hiking, the ropes course, arts and crafts, and movie night ought to make this our best Family Shenanigans weekend yet!

The great thing about Beaver Camp’s Family Shenanigans is that you are welcome to join in on the activities you like - and skip the ones that may not suit your family’s needs. The camp is beautiful, and there are many things that you can choose to do on your own if you prefer. The meals are amazing, the cabins and motels are clean and comfortable, and it’s a wonderful chance to get away. If you are looking for some quality family time in an environment that is safe and accepting of people with special needs, consider attending this weekend sponsored by the Down Syndrome Support Network of Northern New York.

More Info about Beaver Camp and the Family Shenanigans weekend is available on Beaver Camp’s website http://www.beavercamp.org (even pictures of the facility and the sleeping/camping options are available for viewing); or you can call Sara Brooker at 376-4144 if you have questions.

Our annual luncheon and Chinese auction is undergoing some exciting changes this year. First, we decided to hold the event at the Hilton Garden Inn, 1290 Arsenal Street, Watertown. We wanted more room to mingle, and we needed more room for our extensive auction items, so we looked around and decided that the Hilton Garden Inn would meet our needs nicely.

Next, we have invited Carrie Bergeron to speak with us at this year’s luncheon. For those of you who don’t know her, Carrie is a self-advocate who grew up in Dolgeville and currently resides in Rome. She speaks to groups across the country about her journey with Down syndrome and inspires them with her many accomplishments and her desire to show the world that having a disability doesn’t have to limit you.

Finally, we will be offering a hot and cold Brunch Buffet this year which will include; fruit salad, assorted pastries and muffins, scrambled eggs, bacon, sausage, home fries, garden salad vegetable medley, mozzarella pasta bake, lemon and her grilled chicken, coffee, tea, and assorted juices. The cost of the brunch buffet will be $22 for adults and $16 for children aged 5-12. Children under the age of five will be free. Registration for the event will begin at 10:00 a.m., with brunch to be served at 11:00 a.m. We have already begun to collect auction items for the event, and it looks as if this may be our best year yet! This is our largest fund raiser for the year and it provides us with most of the money we need to fund our other activities and projects – so we hope that you will help us spread the word about the event, and we challenge everyone to bring a new guest to the event and join the fun! Reservations must be made in advance for this event so that we can let the Hilton Garden Inn know how many to expect. Please call 315-783-5492 no later than September 19th to make your reservation.