
BARRY GLASSMAN
HARFORD COUNTY EXECUTIVE



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31 Citizens with Disabilities Discover the Thrill of Bike Riding at Harford County “iCan Bike” Camp

BEL AIR, Md., (July 18, 2018) - Thirty-one citizens with disabilities, ranging in age from 8 to 45 years, experienced the thrill of learning to ride a bike at Harford County’s second annual iCan Bike Camp held the week of July 9, 2018 at the Churchville Rec Center – Level Building in Churchville. Sponsored by Harford County Community Services’ Office of Disability Services, with support from Harford County Parks and Recreation and the Local Management Board, the camp was offered for a nominal fee so that citizens of all abilities could feel the sense of accomplishment and freedom of riding a bike. Campers were instructed by professional staff on specially adapted bikes with help from volunteers acting as spotters.

“Recreational skills, especially riding a bike, can often be difficult to master for individuals with disabilities,” said Rachel Harbin, manager of the Office of Disability Services. “Youth and adults who cannot ride a bike miss out on fun and friendships with their siblings and peers, community interaction, exercise, and even job opportunities as they get older. We knew that this camp would provide a safe, supportive and fun environment for riders to gain confidence and build their skills.”

Enthusiasm was all around as County Executive Barry Glassman welcomed the campers’ families and camp volunteers on the Sunday before camp began. By Friday, campers beamed with pride as they learned to ride a two-wheel bike independently.

Carie Sadowski, mother of rider Anna, said, "It's been fun seeing all the different riders progress throughout the week. That's been really rewarding."

She added that at home, her daughter struggled with strength and coordination while riding, but the camp helped develop Anna's skills: "It's been a fantastic program; just the changes that we've seen in her are great."

"Todd wants this [camp] going on every day for the rest of the year," said his mother, Sheri Charpie.

Each camper was paired with a volunteer from the community who assisted them and provided encouragement every day. The more than 50 volunteers bonded with riders, building relationships and raising awareness about the capabilities of those with disabilities in our community.

Volunteers included three pitchers for the Aberdeen IronBirds, Zach Matson, #51, Kevin Magee, #39; and Jimmy Murphy, #27, who got a good workout running alongside their riders. Also volunteering was camp alumnus Scott Jones, who returned with his mother, Angie, to give back to the program, and Amanda Dorsey, former student representative on the Harford County Board of Education, who brought along Sarah Jaramillo and Hannah Choi, two of her college friends.

Volunteer Natalie Davis of Edgewood High School smiled when talking about her rider. "It's been a really great experience," she said. "At the beginning of the week, my rider could barely stay on the bike. But now, she's speeding all around the gym."

All riders received an iCan Bike T-shirt at the start of camp, and at a joyous closing ceremony on the last day they received a baseball cap, courtesy of the IronBirds, a medal of completion, and a certificate from County Executive Glassman.

iCan Bike is a program designed by iCan Shine, an international nonprofit that has taught over 20,000 individuals with disabilities to ride bikes since its founding in 2007. The program uses a fleet of adapted bicycles along with a specialized instructional program and trained staff guiding the riders in a warm and encouraging environment. Over the course of the five-day camp, the adapted bike is adjusted gradually to introduce more instability to challenge riders at their own pace.

For more information about becoming a rider or a volunteer for future iCan Bike camps, please contact Rachel Harbin at raharbin@harfordcountymd.gov.

For more camp photos, please visit Harford County Commission on Disabilities on Facebook.



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