
BARRY GLASSMAN
HARFORD COUNTY EXECUTIVE



BILLY BONIFACE
DIRECTOR OF ADMINISTRATION

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For more information, contact:

Cindy Mumby

Director of Governmental & Community Relations

410-340-5376

camumby@harfordcountymd.gov

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

BEL AIR, Md., (Aug. 23, 2017) - Thirty-two citizens with disabilities, ranging in age from 8 to 35 years, experienced the thrill of learning to ride a bike at Harford County’s iCan Bike Camp held the week of August 14 at the Churchville Rec Center’s 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 bike riding. Participants donned helmets and took hold of the handlebars on a specially adapted bike as they worked with volunteer spotters and professional iCan Bike Camp staff. By week’s end, campers had learned to ride a two-wheel bike independently, gained confidence, and discovered new opportunities for fun, friendships, and future employment.

Excitement was contagious among campers, family members, and volunteers.

Michelle Shramek said of her son, Matthew, “This was an amazing experience. Matthew’s life is changed forever because of your program.”

“Lily is so excited about her new skill,” Lily’s mother, Kelly Nelson, said. “She has gained more confidence in herself. It was a fantastic experience!”

Stacie Wheeley beamed when talking about her son, Nathan: “He has learned to ride a two-wheel bike! I cannot speak highly enough about our experience with the iCan Bike Camp. I am beyond pleased with the whole process.”

Writing on Facebook, Melissa McClellan said of her children, Samuel and Cheyanne, “My two children loved and enjoyed Bike Camp. I never thought it was possible for them to learn to ride a two-wheel bike, and they both did. Thank you to everyone that made this possible [from] staff to volunteers. Harford County is where my heart is.”

Each rider was paired at the camp with a volunteer from the community who assisted them and provided encouragement every day. Volunteers bonded with riders, building relationships and raising awareness about the capabilities of those with disabilities in our community. Youth and adult volunteers came from businesses and organizations including Charm City Run, Towson University in Northeastern Maryland Campus’ Special Education Department, the Harford County Sheriff’s Office, the John Archer School, North Harford High School’s Cross Country Team, Fallston High School’s Best Buddies Organization, and many other generous community residents.

All riders received an iCan Bike T-shirt at the start of the camp and a medal of completion and certificate from County Executive Barry Glassman at the closing ceremony on the last day of camp.

“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 this Bike Camp would provide a safe, supportive and fun environment for riders to practice their bike skills and gain the confidence they need to ride on their own.”

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 individual pace.

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



Photo caption: Harford County iCan Bike camp participants pictured from left: Back row: volunteers Nehemiah Boyd, Jourdan Gray, Joshua Proctor, Kristina Holsapple, Hannah Herron, Alex Trexler, Kaitlyn Trexler, Rachel Otremba, and Amanda Dorsey; and Harford County Disabilities Coordinator Rachel Harbin; Middle row: campers Isaiah Bowden, Sasha Shamshidou, Nathaniel Stuff, and Matthew Shramek; Front row: campers Nathan Wheeley and Alex Murphy

Additional photos available upon request.

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