

We did it again!

By John Durand

Yes, we did, only better!

JohnnyRide 2005 attracted more riders and perhaps more dollars than last year. Folks again had fun and a few adventures. And they want another JohnnyRide in 2006.

Once again we rode in rain on the morning of the first day (Friday, August 19), but it was a warm shower rather than last year's entire morning of dreary, chilly rain. Once again a few riders got lost (we weren't riding on the Gandy Dancer Trail at the time!), but for the most part the three days went as planned. And once again we shared good company and lots of laughs at each day's end.

Surely the JohnnyRide 2005 award for "Most Gutsy Performance" goes to Patricia Durand of Rice Lake, WI. Showing up for the first day's ride with the required helmet and a bike she probably hadn't ridden much lately, Patricia nonetheless pedaled from the ride's beginning in Siren, WI to Centuria and back, a distance of 54 miles, which I'd expect is a number several digits less than her age. And I'd bet money that was by far the longest ride she's ever taken.

Was she glad to get off her bike? You bet! Did she go home with a sore butt? You bet! Did she sleep soundly that night? I don't know, but she surely went home with the admiration of all. Thank you, Patricia, for an outstanding effort.

For also making a great effort and raising a lot of money I want to recognize Gaye Durand and her brother Butch Barton and his wife Theresa, all of De Berry, TX. The three of them drove up just to participate in JohnnyRide 2005. Gaye and Butch rode bikes, while Theresa helped with sag wagon support. Despite blown tires and pickup truck troubles, Gaye and Butch were determined to get in JohnnyRide's 130 miles, and did. Thank you, Gaye, Butch, and Theresa, and we hope ya'll come back again next year to enjoy our Midwest hospitality.

For coming the farthest and also making a great effort I want to recognize Bob and Ellen Olson of Mill Valley, CA, who flew back, rode on borrowed bikes, and completed each day's ride with determination and persistence. While they usually bring up the rear, they always finish in good humor and are a wonderful part of the JohnnyRide

experience. They also brought back a case of Two Buck Chuck, which was much appreciated. Thank you, Bob and Ellen.

For the most innovative (and effective) approach to getting sponsors I want to recognize my son Peter Durand of Minneapolis, MN. Peter told his co-workers that if they pledged such-and-such amount of dollars to support his ride he'd shave his head. He showed up for JohnnyRide with a freshly shaved head. Peter also helped me a lot with planning this year's ride. Thank you, Peter.

For making a great effort to participate I want to recognize Susanne Krasovich and her MD daughter Susanne (also Krasovich). The two Susannes drove some 350 miles from their homes in the environs of Milwaukee, WI on Friday night so they could ride their bikes on Saturday and Sunday. Although they didn't arrive until very late, they were up and ready to go next morning. Thank you, mom and daughter Susannes.

For a welcome shot of youth I want to thank Drew Cureton of Plymouth, MN, who at age 17 is the youngest rider yet in JohnnyRide. Drew rode all three days and was a constant source of enthusiasm and good sense (he kept reminding me to make sure the last rider carried a First Aid kit). Thank you, Drew. I hope we see you next year too.

For another welcome shot of "fresh blood" I want to recognize Andy Keppel of Mayer, MN, who left his wife and three wee ones at home so he could ride for three days. No only did Andy ride, but he garnered a generous donation of powerbars from his employer, Lifetime Fitness. Andy's pledges raised a good chunk of money and his powerbars helped cut JohnnyRide's costs. Alas! Andy could not go three days without seeing his beloved wife and wee ones; they drove to Siren to spend Saturday night with him. Thanks, Andy.

Surely special recognition has to go to Chuck and Anne Fick of Plainview, MN. Back again after riding last year (when he became known as Ironman), Chuck rode again this year, while Anne again provided great sag wagon support. Although she's done sag wagon duty for two years, Anne says we shouldn't be surprised if we see her as a rider in 2006. We hope we do, but whatever the case you will never meet two nicer people than Chuck and Anne. Thank you both.

And what about my sister Alice? Once again she organized JohnnyRide's sag wagon support. This was a disappointment to Alice, because she really wanted to ride this

year, but a knee operation kept her from a training regimen. Once again her husband Pat was a steady source of good judgment and support. And once again he helped build a photographic record of JohnnyRide. Hopefully both will be able to ride next year, but meanwhile I can only give heartfelt thanks for a job well done to Alice and Pat Keppel of Mayer, MN.

Oh, there are so many to recognize!

Marilyn Durand of Burnsville, MN rode last year and this year joined us to ride on Saturday. But before that she made sure she logged enough miles on her bike to make up for the day's ride she had to miss because of work. Despite her ending Saturday not feeling that great, we were very happy to see Marilyn come back to ride on Sunday also. For your most welcome participation (and perseverance), thank you, Marilyn.

Two new riders this year were Mike Miller and his son Alex of Eau Claire, WI. They both rode on Saturday and Sunday. While Mike discovered he had body parts he hadn't used in a while, he stuck with it to the end. Meanwhile, Alex with his younger legs stayed with the pace-setters in admirable fashion. Thanks for riding, Mike and Alex, and I hope we see you next year also.

Warren and Beth Utecht of Bayport, MN last year provided a picnic supper for JohnnyRiders. This year they marked the off-trail route and helped with logistics and sag wagon support. As with the Ficks, you won't meet two finer people, and I'm so glad they came up to join the fun. Thanks, Warren and Beth.

Janice Durand (recently moved to Minneapolis, MN) also helped with taking pictures and providing support, while Jennifer Olson of St. Paul, MN came up to boost our sag wagon crew. Thank you both for taking the time help out, Janice and Jennifer.

We had three new special contributors this year. Fran Waite of Spooner, WI made a lot of folks happy by baking three ice cream pails of cookies and other goodies for JohnnyRide folks. Likewise Virginia and Dan James of Spooner provided homemade desserts and condiments for midday lunches. Thanks so much, Fran, Virginia, and Dan.

If we gave out medals then surely Julie Durand, my son Peter's better half, would receive a great big one. Not only did she organize a highly successful miniature golf tournament for Saturday evening that involved both grown-ups and kids in an entertaining event, but on Sunday she and her mother, Jeanette Cureton of Plymouth,

MN, provided a wonderful celebratory picnic at ride's end. Thank you both, Julie and Jeanette.

This year "Sag Wagon Alice" (well, as her brother I can probably get away with that!) presented "stage winner" awards to the rider who first finished each day's ride. Receiving Lance Armstrong LIVESTRONG bracelets and European style kisses on each cheek were Peter Durand (Day One), Andy Keppel (Day Two), and Peter Durand (Day Three).

Alice also created a special award for outstanding achievement, JohnnyRide's first traveling trophy, a floppy stuffed Holstein. The winner was Ellen Olson. When Alice presented her with the award she took note of Ellen's usual place at the back of the pack by citing her "tenacity and generosity, but not velocity."

There's talk of holding next year's JohnnyRide in the Twin Cities area. Folks think we might get more riders and raise more money. For my part I can only say, "have bike, will travel." Whatever it takes to keep JohnnyRide going as a fun event that raises money for our foundation's scholarship fund will have my enthusiastic support. Meanwhile, although I'm repeating myself (as I'm wont to do in my dotage) I say to everyone who rode, helped, or donated to JohnnyRide 2005, you're great! ***Migwech!***