



Like our team motto says "Just because we have to sit down, doesn't mean we have to sit still", Racerjack, Jack Eherenman from Waterloo, Iowa.

I'm one of many wheelers /hand cyclists who have "run" the course since 2003. I have won 3 out of those four years and was beaten by a good racer one of those years. Each year I'm greeted by cheers, supportive greetings, hoots, whistles etc for encouragement while giving out my own "keep up the good work" or nice job etc. I enjoy the camaraderie. I try to do several 5k-marathons each year to keep in shape and keep a competitive edge, no matter the finish. But I really race for a bigger picture than just for myself. I have 4 boys, 2 with disabilities. One races shorter races with me on a hand cycle.

I started him at a camp for kids with disabilities when he was in about 4th grade. He became a wheelchair racer on his high school track team, was a multi event champion at the boys state track meet in Iowa, in track and field events. He is the only athlete who used a wheelchair to become a state champion and is on the same "Wall of Fame" as Dan Gable and others from his high school. He started playing with the NWBA Iowa Chariots wheelchair basketball team in 10th grade. I became the team coordinator and fundraising chairman. He still plays and I scrimmage each week with them to make a full team at practice. We play in competitive tournaments with other NWBA teams through the Midwest and also play several fundraiser games each year for groups to contribute to their charities. Check us out at <http://iowachairiots.homestead.com/LinksPage.html>

I bought him a hand cycle for recreation and he and I both liked riding it. I started riding it in races to open them up for wheelers and hand cyclists to be able to participate and get exercise along with the others who came to race. Along with racing comes an awareness that athletes who have disabilities can participate in events like this and others and become active, not only in sports, but in other ways to make their communities better.

I started an annual camp last year for young athletes, 3rd grade through high school, with disabilities to come to UNI (University of Northern Iowa) to learn how to do many competitive sports in wheelchairs. We teach them basketball, track and field, soccer, football, bocce ball all in sports chairs, and do rock climbing. We teach them weight training, and nutrition to help them in their daily lives. After a few days, we can really see how their lives are changed by this.

I know what it has done for our family and others whose lives were touched by association with sports. That is why I started the camp as the other camp had stopped. This is the only camp in Iowa teaching kids to become active in all of life's ventures. They only needed the chance to learn and opportunity to participate, which is almost impossible due to cost, equipment needed and others to participate.

I ride so others who come behind me can ride in the future. Many will see me and others in the race and hopefully be encouraged, or encourage someone they know, to try it. Opportunity is the key. This race and those who run it, and watch it, have contributed in so many ways to helping with this, through encouraging each other to do the best we can. It really doesn't matter where one finishes in the race, but that you're in the race. I will continue in my passion to make things better for all of us, by encouraging people with disabilities to become active in their communities and the community to support their efforts.