

Hope and help
for people
with ALS

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Ride for 3 Reasons	p. 1
A Touchdown for ALS: Northwestern Football	p. 2
Running for Those Who Can't: Team Race for ALS	p. 3
National ALS Registry Meeting Highlights	p. 4

From Generation to Generation: Embodying the True Spirit of "Paying it Forward"

Ride for 3 Reasons

In 2001, Barrington community member Bob Lee began one of the most important journeys of his life. After reading Mitch Albom's *Tuesdays with Morrie* and feeling so inspired by the words of the main character, Morrie Schwartz, Bob passed the book on tape to a neighbor who had retired and was moving to California.

"He [the neighbor] loved the book so much he listened to it twice. Five months after moving, he called to tell me he had been diagnosed with ALS," said Bob. This pushed Bob to begin thinking about his own life and what he wanted to do with the time he had left.

One day, while out on a bike ride, a plan formed and the Ride for 3 Reasons was born. Over the course of the next 11 years, Bob embarked on three separate bike rides across the continent, raising tremendous amounts of both money and awareness for three reasons: hospice, cancer and ALS. In all, Bob biked close to 12,000 miles and raised over \$1.3 million, split evenly among the three causes. While each ride brought in more donors and raised more money, the rides also gave Bob more opportunities to educate people about all three causes.



Jan and Bob on a ride together

"Hearing him speak, even back then, I knew I wanted to ride across the USA the way he had."

In 2007, as Bob spoke at local elementary schools, he unknowingly planted a seed in the mind of a third grader who never forgot Bob's remarkable achievements.

"I remember sitting 'criss-cross-apple-sauce' on the gym floor of my elementary school," said Jan Gierlach. "Hearing him speak, even back then, I knew I wanted to ride across the USA the way he had."

Nine years later, at age 17, the "If you can dream it, you can do it" seed from Bob's presentation had grown in Jan's mind. With the support of his parents, Jan began to develop a plan to make his own cross-country trek on a bicycle.

Remembering his inspiration, Jan reached out to Bob to introduce himself and learn more about the logistics of planning such a ride. While Jan's initial goal for his ride was to gain a sense of independence before starting college, Bob urged Jan that biking for a cause beyond himself would make it a much richer experience.

"I'd love for you to do this for a Ride for 3 Reasons," Bob said. And to Bob's delight, Jan agreed. Now, Jan has picked up the torch as the next generation to Ride for 3 Reasons, riding for the same three causes Bob had.

"It's very rewarding to see Jan take on this challenge. I'm honored to know him and be involved with this. The real lesson for me is, you never know who's listening or observing what we're doing. To me, it's neat there was that connection for Jan and that he was really listening and not pinching the little girl next to him on that gym floor," said Bob.

Story continued on back panel.



Jan and his family

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Ride for 3 Reasons, continued from front page

Jan will graduate from high school a semester early in December and take off on his solo bike ride in February of 2017, riding 3,300 miles from San Diego, California to St. Augustine, Florida, raising money and awareness for the Ride for 3 Reasons. While a fundraising goal has yet to be set, Jan and Bob have no doubt this ride will build upon the success and the lessons of the three prior trips Bob completed.

For Bob, Jan's ride is about inspiration. "You think of Jan, at the age of 17 taking on this huge challenge and of people hearing his story and asking, 'What can I do to make a difference and how big can I make it?' It's pretty special."

Note: Bob Lee recently retired from the Board of Directors of the Les Turner ALS Foundation after 14 years of dedicated service. Inspired by his friendship with and support of many PALS, Bob helped raise hundreds of thousands of dollars for ALS research and patient care, which he continues to do. We are tremendously grateful to Bob for his passion and concern for all PALS and his devoted service to the Foundation, as both a board member and active supporter.

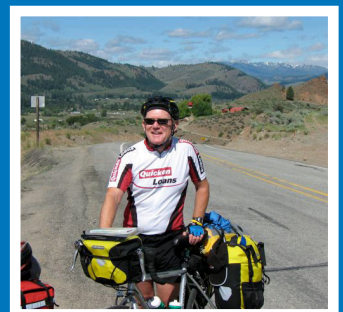


Photo Caption: Bob Lee on his second Ride for 3 Reasons