

'A super smooth ride'

Project Mobility puts disabled in driver's seat

By MARK FOSTER

editorial@kcchronicle.com

ST. CHARLES – The crowd cheered as Kyle Moser took his new hand-powered, low-to-the-ground cycle for a spin.

The 24-year-old Marine Corps veteran lost both his legs at the age of 19 when he stepped on an improvised explosive device while serving in Afghanistan in 2011.



Hal Honeyman

His new vehicle was a gift from Project Mobility, an organization that puts wounded veterans and other disabled people in the seat of a specially equipped cycle.

"It is a super smooth ride," Moser said of his new wheels.

Moser, who soon will be moving to Batavia from Oswego, is moving on with his life, and is planning to open a coffee shop in downtown Naperville.

That's just what Hal Honeyman, founder of Project Mobility and owner of The Bike Rack store in St. Charles, wants to hear.

"What can be fatal, especially for vets, is lack of engagement," Honeyman said. "With the mobility of a bike they are engaged with their peers and with their friends and other injured veterans. It's a first step in their recovery."

Moser, two other veterans and two children with disabilities received cycles during Project Mobility's fourth annual bike ride on Sept. 11.

The event attracted more than 200 bicyclists who rode anywhere from 10 to 60 miles to raise money for the cause, starting and ending at James O. Breen Community Park in St. Charles.

At the park, there was a festival of food and music, with business sponsors, speeches and a giant American flag fluttering in the breeze, reminding everyone of the 9/11 anniversary.

The centerpiece of the celebration was the presentation of the specially equipped bicycles – actually, tricycles.

Linda Brashears, 62, of Romeoville is an Army veteran who was serving on a forward operating base in Iraq in 2006, when she suffered a moderate traumatic brain injury during an enemy motor attack.

Her new pedal-powered tricycle with two front wheels provides her with the stability she needs.



Photos by Mary Beth Nolan - For Shaw Media

Wounded veteran Kyle Moser gets settled in a bicycle given to him by Project Mobility on Sept. 11 at Everybody Rides in James O. Breen Community Park in Campton Hills. Moser was wounded in Afghanistan and has been unable to ride because of his injuries.



Amy and Pat Milz applaud for their 8-year-old daughter Rebekah as she takes a ride on a modified bicycle she received from Operation Mobility on Sept. 11.

said she believes the benefits will be more than just physical.

"It's more of a mental prescription to get out and be with other people," Brashears said.

Kevin Hanrahan of Wisconsin, a Marine Corps veteran wounded in Afghanistan, also received a cycle, but was unable to attend the event. Rebekah Milz, 8, of Elburn received a shiny upright tricycle with a special safety brake and steering that her parents, Amy and Patrick Milz, can control from the rear of the vehicle while their daughter rides.

Milz is coping with some serious developmental disabilities, but was successfully pedaling ahead on her ride.

"The seating is more supportive for her needs," said Amy Milz, who was working as a volunteer at the event. "This is my opportunity to pay it forward."

Also receiving a new set of wheels was Keenan McLaughlin, 7, of Elmhurst. Keenan's father Pat McLaughlin said his son is living with cerebral palsy.

"There's no disability where we can't find some kind of solution," Honeyman said. "It's just the right equipment with the right modification. It's

trial and error and persistence."

Honeyman said his son Jacob, now 23, was the inspiration for Project Mobility. Jacob also lives with cerebral palsy, which affects his limbs and speech.

"He has a great attitude," Honeyman said of his son.

Honeyman said that tandem bikes can be the solution for veterans who have lost their sight. He told the story of a big, powerful man who was blinded by an IED. His diminutive wife takes the lead seat.

"She provides the vision, and he provides the horsepower," Honeyman said.

Minor Mobley, owner of Excel Automotive Repair in St. Charles, was the lead sponsor for the event.

"I want to give back to veterans who wouldn't have the means to do so," said Mobley, a Marine Corps veteran.

Former St. Charles Mayor Fred Norris was on hand to call attention to the 9/11 anniversary, and praised Honeyman for his efforts to help veterans.

"What Hal has done is phenomenal," Norris said. "He's put St. Charles on the map with a very important, very caring project."