

Get on your bike for Norwood, urges Maccabiah medal winner

12 August 2009

A British medal hero at the recent Maccabiah Games is calling on cycling enthusiasts to get on their bikes to raise money for Norwood during its Israel Bike Ride, which will be held from 17-25 October 2009. The stunning circular 400km route starts and finishes in Jerusalem and takes in the Judean Hills, the Negev Highlands and the Dead Sea.

Danny Ackerman, 52, was part of a team of five British cyclists which scooped silver in the time trials tournament at last month's Maccabiah Games – a Jewish athletic tournament held in Israel every four years which has become the third largest sporting event in the world.



Danny, of Oakridge Avenue, Radlett, has taken part in more than a dozen Norwood bike rides, including three in Israel, and has signed up to the Rajasthan challenge later this year with his 24-year-old daughter Gemma.

"I started 15 years ago with the Jerusalem to Eilat ride in 1994," he said. "Initially, I thought that it would be quite an adventure to cycle across the desert. It was also an opportunity to raise money and put something back into the community. I hadn't ridden a bike since I was a kid, so the idea of such a long cycle was daunting. But since then, I've done a Norwood ride almost every year and I started riding tandems a few years ago."

Participants like Danny ride on tandems with service users with learning disabilities on all of Norwood's international cycle challenges, including Israel.

"It was a huge challenge but a wonderful achievement, and it's what does it for me now," he said. "Over the course of the ride, you spend up to eight hours with service users, and it's a great bonding experience."



Danny even goes so far as to credit his involvement in the Charity's bike rides for his success at the Maccabiah Games. In fact, a number of his team mates have also taken part over the years.

"Maccabiah was definitely borne out of the Norwood charity rides," he said. "And to go from the Norwood rides to getting silver was quite an achievement. We trained five days a week for six months to get ourselves fit, and it was very hard. We just went to Israel to do the best we could."

"We had no idea we had the ability to compete and come back with medals, so it was a complete shock. It was the icing on the cake for what was an incredible experience. Also, getting a medal on the first day meant we could enjoy the whole week."

Norwood pioneered the concept of charity bike rides in 1992 with a trip to Israel, and 17 years later the event is still going strong.

Danny said: "Norwood's rides are a great opportunity to get fit. I've also made a large number of friends over the years. There's a huge sense of camaraderie and support. It's also a great opportunity to raise money. There's so much good that comes out of it."

Last year's ride in Israel raised an incredible £42,000 for services which offer vital support to thousands of children, adults and families coping with learning disabilities or social disadvantage.

Ian Tate, Norwood's Head of Challenges, said: "While we cannot guarantee every Norwood rider the chance to go on and compete at the Maccabiah Games, we can guarantee you a once in a lifetime experience. Like all of our well-organised rides, this year's Israel ride will not only prove to be a great challenge but will be great fun as well."

The registration fee, which includes flights, accommodation, meals and travel insurance, is £450 (£400 for under-30s). The minimum sponsorship is £2,500 (£1,500 for under-30s).

To register for the Israel Bike Ride, and to find out more about forthcoming Norwood Challenges, visit www.norwood.org.uk/challenges, call 020 8420 6834 or e-mail challenges@norwood.org.uk

Norwood Challenges Calendar 2009-2010

ISRAEL BIKE RIDE

17-25 October 2009

RAJASTHAN BIKE RIDE

29 October-8 November 2009

LONDON MARATHON

Sunday, 25 April, 2010

WATERSIDE WALK

Sunday, 9 May, 2010

JUNIOR BIKE RIDE

Sunday, 20 June, 2010

CAPITAL TO COAST CYCLE CHALLENGE

Sunday, 27 June, 2010

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