

Israel Bike Ride raises more than £60,000 for Norwood

27 October 2009

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Some 26 charity cyclists returned to the UK on Sunday tired but elated after raising more than £60,000 on Norwood's Israel Bike Ride. During the course of the week, they completed a stunning 400km circular route which started and finished in the ancient and beautiful city of Jerusalem after winding its way through the Judean Hills, the Negev Highlands and the Dead Sea.

Norwood pioneered the concept of charity bike rides in 1992 with a trip to Israel and the success of this year's event proves it is still going strong. Ian Tate, Norwood's Head of Challenges, said: "This year's Israel ride was an amazing experience for the riders who took part. We attracted a record number of first time participants and, although the route was often challenging and the weather unusually hot for this time of year, the sense of camaraderie among the group was fantastic. Most importantly, everyone should feel very proud that they have raised a significant amount of money for people with learning disabilities and children and families in need." As with every international Challenge, adults with learning disabilities who are supported by Norwood, including a group from the Charity's Ravenswood residential community in Berkshire, also took part.

Among the riders were John Naar, 64, an electrical engineer from Coombe Hill, near Kingston, and his 17-year-old son Max, a student at Kingston Grammar School who only learnt to ride a bike this year. John, who still takes part in Norwood rides despite having a triple heart bypass 11 years ago, said: "This year's ride was great because, for me, it felt very special returning to Israel to take part in something so familiar but for the first time with Max, who was only eight months old when I completed the very first Norwood Challenge. Max now has the 'bug' and cannot wait to participate in another ride. The fact that Jon, one of the Ravenswood residents, chose to sit next to Max for our Shabbat Dinner was just one of his emotional highlights. I was probably the eldest rider and he was nearly the youngest which made it a most memorable ride for both of us."

Another father and son team were first-timer Aaron Searle, 16, a sixth form pupil at Manchester Grammar School, and his dad Barrie, who was taking part in his fifth international bike ride. Barrie, a 56-year-old barrister from Cheadle, said: "We had an absolute ball. The riding was good and you couldn't have asked for more beautiful scenery. Aaron also interacted very well with the residents from Ravenswood who rode with us, and it was nice that some of the regular riders took him under their wing. He definitely wants to do the Norwood Challenge in Kenya next year."

Meanwhile, regular rider Charles Barnett, 52, a managing director of a lighting company who lives in Harrow Weald, north-west London, said: "The camaraderie on this year's ride was amazing. Within hours of the group setting off on the first day it was clear that everyone was there for each other, through words of encouragement while we rode and the sharing stories of aches and pains at the many snacks and water stops along the way. Also, the tandem riders from Ravenswood were an inspiration as always. It was a truly wonderful experience."

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

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