

Tony LaRussa

Guardian Protection in Marshall donates for My Bike Program

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Alvin Brown, 4, from Bloomfield rides his new adaptive bicycle, which was donated by employees at Guardian Protection Services in Marshall.

The first time Joe Colosimo saw a disabled child receive a customized bicycle that gives the child the freedom to ride like other children, he wanted to get involved.

“I was at the Variety (children's charity) gala in 2012 when the first adaptive bikes were presented,” said Colosimo, president of Guardian Protection Services in Marshall. “It seems so minor. Every kid wants a bike. But to realize that for many children, riding a regular bike is just not possible.

“To see a child with disabilities get his first bike and be able to be mobile was very touching. I thought our employees would really be able to get behind this,” he said.

And Colosimo was right.

Guardian employees loved the idea and decided to use the \$3,600 raised from 50/50 raffles they hold during the holidays to buy adaptive bicycles for disabled children.

On Thursday, a pair of the three-wheeled bikes — one blue, the other red, and both adorned with bows on the handle bars and teddy bears on the seats — were given to Alvin Brown, 4, of Bloomfield, who has cerebral palsy, and Artie Rhone, 10, of West Mifflin, who has autism.



Alvin Brown, 4, from Bloomfield rides his new adaptive bicycle, which was donated by employees at Guardian Protection Services in Marshall.

“We’re really thankful for this bike,” said Artie’s mother, Charlene Filsaime. “This will be a great way for him to have another activity that he can do with his brother and sister.”

Alvin’s grandmother, Karen Brown, said receiving the bike was “a blessing.”

“He enjoys riding a bike when he’s at the Children’s Institute so it will be wonderful for him to be able to ride when he’s at home,” she said. “We would never be able to afford something like this on our own.”

Money raised this year will be used to buy bikes for children in 2016. Employees already have raised \$1,600, which includes a \$900 donation from one of the company’s employees.

Charlie LaVallee, the chief executive officer of Variety the Children’s Charity, said the My Bike Program was developed to “create a larger impact for kids with disabilities.”

“Almost everyone can relate to the feelings of riding their first bike,” LaVallee said. “We just want the children who get these bikes to be typical kids — not kids with disabilities, just kids who can ride with their brothers, sisters, cousins and friends.”

Since its launch in early November 2012, the My Bike program has given away more than 1,000 adaptive bikes to disabled children in Pennsylvania and West Virginia.

“Guardian stepped in right at the beginning of the program, and has continued to support us in a terrific way,” he said. “But the most important thing anyone can do for this program is to identify children who can use one of these bikes. That's really at the heart of what we are trying to do.”



Charlene Filsaime of West Mifflin smiles as her son, Artie, 10, rides his new adaptive bicycle, which was donated by employees at Guardian Protection Services in Marshall.

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