

2020 Inspiration Award winner: Josh Jacobson



Josh Jacobson keeps riding for the cause — and the people.

by Aviva Patz

Josh Jacobson of Minneapolis doesn't have multiple sclerosis, nor does anyone in his family. Yet the 58-year-old lawyer has participated in Bike MS: Ride Across Minnesota for 14 years, raising over \$104,000 for the MS movement.

"I love the cause, but it's the people who keep me coming back as much as the cause," says Jacobson, a winner of the National Multiple Sclerosis Society's Inspiration Award. "Even the first year, I was amazed at how friendly everyone was. I resolved then that even if I didn't ever ride again, I would come back and volunteer."

Less than a success

Jacobson first heard about Ride Across Minnesota, the Society's five-day, 300-mile bike ride, in an article in the Minneapolis Star Tribune in 2007. At the time, he had just gone through a divorce and was experiencing a midlife crisis. "I hadn't ridden a bike in almost 25 years," he says. "I didn't even own a bike at the time." But something about the event intrigued him. His first ride was less than a smashing success. He spent a lot of time with heat exhaustion in the "SAG wagon," the support and gear van that gives the road-weary a break. But no one looked down on him for taking rests, and the nurse who treated him at the time became his friend. "I met some incredible people," he says. "The camaraderie was amazing, not just on my team but on my ride as a whole." Jacobson kept coming back and was eventually recruited to join

the Krebs Cyclers team, which he now co-captains.

Getting back more than he gives

Jacobson has many favorite memories from past rides, including three and a half years ago when his son joined him. “You have to be 12 years to ride, and he was 12 and one day. He was the youngest rider and a bit of a celebrity as a result,” Jacobson says. “People sang ‘Happy Birthday’ to him at the rest stops.”

But Jacobson’s most powerful connection to Bike MS happened off the ride route when he lost his girlfriend, a fellow rider and volunteer, in an accident in July 2020. “The outpouring of love I got from the MS Society and other riders was amazing,” he says. “I got cards and emails. Donations to her Bike MS account poured in from volunteers, staffers and other riders. It meant so much.”

Jacobson plans to do the next Ride Across Minnesota and already registered for the next Bike MS: Twin Cities Ride. “I will do this ride until I’m in my 80s,” he says. “And then when I can’t ride, I’ll volunteer.”

Aviva Patz is a writer in Montclair, New Jersey.

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