

Prodded to pedal, dad goes distance

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Jim Walsh

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Most grown children, when making requests to their parents, stick to traditional topics.

Can you lend me money? Will you store my stuff? And can you lend me more money to buy more stuff?

But Oaklyn native Daniel Stringer might have gone a bit far with this pitch to his parents: Want to take a bike ride -- for 275 miles?

And just as surprising, to me at least, is that his father, Tommie, Oaklyn's 59-year-old school superintendent, accepted the offer.

The two Stringers recently tackled a three-day, three-state trek, where participants were challenged to pedal for charity from Gettysburg, Pa., to New York City.

Daniel, a 27-year-old cycling enthusiast, made the trip for the first time in 2006. His father and mother, Lynn, greeted him at the finish line, where he urged them to take part in this year's ride.

Now, again for me, the correct answer there is, "I'd love to, butt."

"It's really not that hard," Daniel assures me.

Then comes a pause as reality sets in.

"OK, it is hard," he concedes. "Physically and emotionally it's hard. You hurt a lot."

But Tommie Stringer, who had mostly biked around his neighborhood, figured he had a year to prepare.

Turns out he needed it.

"When I first started out, I did 12 miles and I thought I was going to die," the senior Stringer says. Eventually, though, he was knocking off eight-hour jaunts to and from Shore towns.

Still, that's not the same as riding about 10 marathons in a row.

"The night before the ride, I couldn't sleep at all," says Tommie, who was among the oldest of 100-plus riders in the Sept. 28-30 event. "It was the excitement of it."



Photo provided
Oaklyn Schools Superintendent Tommie Stringer and his son Daniel raised more than \$8,000 for charity in their distance ride.

He remembers the trip as “challenging but incredibly well-organized.”

Which, come to think of it, might also describe hell.

“There were tons of hills, some well over a mile long, and some quite rough roads,” says Tommie, who started each leg of the ride with his son. “But the scenery was awesome.”

Among other amenities, riders found rest stops every 15 miles or so. A van picked up bicyclists who, um, ran out of gas.

And each rider got a pair of padded pants. You can laugh, but I would have asked for two.

The trip was “almost a spiritual experience,” says Daniel Stringer, a college administrator who now lives in Hackettstown, Warren County. “Everyone was riding for a cause and as a community.”

Together, the Stringers raised more than \$8,000 to benefit HIV/AIDS programs at The Lesbian, Gay, Bisexual and Transgender Community Center in New York. In the end, though, the rigorous route was just too much -- for the younger Stringer.

“The irony is my dad did much better than I did,” says the son, whose busy schedule had hampered his training program, causing him to hop on the van twice. “He biked the whole way.”

Still, father and son plan to ride again -- and Daniel Stringer is already seeking new recruits.

“Maybe next year,” he says, “we can get my mother to ride with us.”

Jim Walsh column runs on Mondays. Contact him at (856) 486-2646 or jwalsh@courierpostonline.com