

Distance for a Difference Tour

By Giles Stapleton

If you've become a parent you would no doubt have experienced the extremes of your emotions at some point along the way. Joy, fear, exhaustion, anger and elation are a few of the many things our little people help us feel, often at the same time and on any normal day. Most of us will share the funny stories about our children with each other but few will freely off-load the burden of the difficult ones, often because it takes all of our strength to keep it all together.

I dread to think how that emotional rollercoaster would increase if a child suffered a serious injury. Every day I feel very fortunate my own children are healthy, happy and normal but I am constantly reminded how quickly that can all change.

My wife and I have committed to both cycle 600 from Cessnock to Gloucester then Hornsby over four days in March 2014 (www.distanceforadifferencetour.org.au). We will join 58 other cyclists to ride approx. 150 kms a day to raise \$2000 each for the Day of Difference Foundation.

The foundation was founded in 2004 by Ron Delezio and his wife, Carolyn Martin, following the tragic, highly publicised accidents of their daughter Sophie. It is a non-profit registered national charity based in Sydney and governed by an independent board of directors. The foundation's revenue is generated by donations, philanthropic grants and sponsorships. Its purpose is to permanently reduce the incidence and impact of children's critical injury in Australia.

Critical injuries can happen to anyone's child. If they do they are mostly unexpected and change the child's and parents' life dramatically. Answering the questions parents face when a dreadful injury occurs and providing vital support to the children is the work the foundation does to care for these extraordinarily vulnerable families.

Cycling is a sport that appeals for its lack of wear and tear on already sport damaged joints and limbs. It can have a positive effect on cardiovascular fitness, muscle strength and flexibility, joint mobility, stress, posture and coordination, bone strength, body fat levels and anxiety and depression. Whilst I have always known how to ride a bike, having it as a health and social asset had never really been a consideration.

Recently, encouraged by a good mate to do the Distance for a Difference Tour, I started serious

training. It started with a two hour ride from Curl Curl to Palm Beach at 6am on a Saturday morning, infused half way with vegemite toast and a strong flat white to offset the effects of the weekly celebrations of Friday evening. That morphed into occasionally cycling the 20kms from Curl Curl to Selborne Chambers and back to shed some hip-bone handles. A few weeks later I am part of a group that goes flat out for 65 to 90 kms on a Saturday morning before the rest of the family has opened the curtains and have joined another group that cycles to the city three times a week.

The threat of having to back up three days in a row from 150kms the day before is serious motivation for finding ways to use my bike. The mental benefits of having a break from the day to day domesticity of life help you relax and the physical benefits keep on shining through. The best part is I have not had to sacrifice my love of chocolate, cheese or pinot noir. Whilst my first year at the New South Wales Bar might be the easiest time in my new career to spread my time around, I am hoping to embed the habits so they stick as balancing benefits as I get increasingly busy.

Our children are our most precious gifts. We can marvel at their resilience and even those that are recovering from serious injury can talk about Lego, Barbie, helicopters and iPad games the same as any more fortunate child can. As parents though it is possible to become traumatised and overwhelmed with guilt. As an expression of my continual gratitude for healthy, happy children I would like to do my part to improve the care and support of those less fortunate parents.

If donating to the foundation could be a similar expression of gratitude for you, please feel free to sponsor me at <https://distanceforadifference2014.everydayhero.com/au/giles>

Thank you very much for your support. Every dollar donated will go directly to the foundation. Also, if you like the idea of cycling for sport or already have the bug, don't hesitate to consider joining this or a similar type of tour next year.