

**Day One - Saturday, 6/21 -Manchester, St. Bridget to Litchfield, St. Anthony of Padua**

I can’t remember how long I have been with my Brake The Cycle family but it feels like they have been in my life forever. I think it has been 4 years but I can’t be sure. The Holy Spirit was with us yet again today as we rode from St. Bridget Church in Manchester to St. Anthony of Padua in Litchfield. The sky was blue with a slight breeze and sun shining on us from above. The buzz that filled the air surrounded the riders and support folks as we packed and repacked the cars, gave hugs, shed tears, coordinated maneuvers, fixed the first flat tire, spread angel wings to best friends (Pam I hope that angel I gave you spreads its wings around your bike and keeps you safe!), and prayed to God to protect us and help us spread his message. I paused and drank in the scene with anticipation and butterflies in my stomach as we stood in a circle and prayed (I know, I know, Wendy get in here and stop taking pictures ) and then we rode off to parts unknown. What’s 50 miles uphill between friends?

I had just assured Suzanne Ryan before we left, who could not do support this year, that we will be fine and not to worry about us only having 3 support people and two cars, but then again, how do you read this darn Q sheet? How did those riders take off so fast and which way did they go? I look to my right and the seat is empty but I knew I’d be fine and I’d figure it out. I found some flashy orange and green shirts in no time and the stalker/paparazzi was on their tail for the next 6 days. I enjoyed the solidarity and at the same time missed my SAG (support and gear) wagon buddies –Kelly? Joan? Suzanne? Kathy? Anyone? I never wanted anyone to tell me where to go so much before in my life! OK God it’s just you and me now – and that British guy in the GPS who is going to be mad at me for a week because of all the work he will have to do and redo –recalculating!! He doesn’t realize I’m just using him for his brains to tell me what street I’m on.

The morning is filled with going in circles, going up hills and down, phone calls to support, picking up tired riders, feeding and watering hungry and thirsty (and sweaty) riders and enjoying the scenery. We stopped for lunch and had a Subway picnic behind a church and met some very nice people –the first of many this week I’m sure. The afternoon is filled with waiting around corners and at the top of a hill to make sure the riders make it up to the top.They start to drop off at some point and one by one start to get into the SAG wagon. We love to be there when they need us but we hope they don’t for their sake. By the time we get to Litchfield, 3 riders out of 8 are still up. A few houses away from the church and Eric has a breakdown with a broken spoke. Within a couple minutes, thank you new IPhone, we know of a bike shop in the area that is open for the next 25 minutes. Quickly Eric and Johnnie F. hop in the car and off they go out of the church parking lot. But wait, was that Joan going down? She’s not supposed to go down, she doesn’t ride a bike! Hold up and let’s see if she is OK. Joan lays on the ground seeing stars in the daylight after missing a step coming out of the church basement and hitting the railing. Pam and everyone jump into action to get her a pillow, first aid kit, Aleve, water, etc. Thank you God that I didn’t have to use that defibulater because don’t tell the others, I could use a refresher course. She’s OK but her ribs are hurting her pretty badly (ends up cracking some ribs). Pam stop making her laugh! We might be down another support person!! We love you Joan and hope you feel better soon.

John Ryan speaks eloquently during Mass and then we talk to people as they come out afterwards. Our display is set up and I catch a picture of a little girl reading the display – beautiful. We encourage them to write letters to their State representative and make a difference in their community. It’s a beautiful night so we head out for dinner at a little Italian Restaurant and eat outside. The reminiscing of past trips surrounds the group and also a recap of today’s events. Time to relax and unwind. We have a wonderful dinner and then head back to the parish house for a welcome shower. The hospitality of the parishes we visit forever astonishing. We do our laundry, do a bagel run in preparation for breakfast and sit around reflecting on the crazy day enjoying pictures and each other’s quirky personality. Everyone says the word that sticks out the most today to describe their day. I can’t recall what mine was but I did mention that the Holy Spirit filled the day. The Dr. Seuss book came to mind with “Oh the places you’ll go” and “the people you’ll meet” or however that goes. That’s a lot to happen on Day 1!! I wonder what Day 2 will bring. Up tomorrow at 5:00 am.

Wendy