

I Ride with MS Ambassador: Amy Rowell

Age: 38

Hometown: Muskego

Bike MS Team: SPROCKET ROCKETS

Diagnosed with relapsing-remitting MS in 2007

Amy Rowell still has her very first bicycle – a red Schwinn – that she received for her fifth birthday. Today she rides a recumbent tadpole trike, which she bought the night before her first Bike MS: Best Dam Bike Ride in 2009. “I had grown tired of everyone telling me what I could/couldn’t or should/shouldn’t do, so I dragged my husband to Wheel & Sprocket and test-rode (what is now) my bike around the parking lot, very impulsively made the purchase, and the next day was sitting at the starting line when I realized what I’d done!” Today the 38-year-old wife, mother and Director of Development at a private school in the Milwaukee area trains by riding that recumbent on a 10-mile route a few times each week. “Ten miles is the average between rest stops (on the Bike MS route) so if I can make it that far, I’m good! It really is that simple – it sounds overwhelming but if you break it up, it is totally manageable.”



Amy Rowell (center)

More about Amy:

- Amy was 31 when she was diagnosed. That’s right in the middle of the typical age range for diagnosis.
- She is a wife, mother, Muskego resident and owner of Daniel, the world-famous 26-toed cat. She is the Director of Development at St. Thomas More High School, her alma mater.
- A recumbent bike allows Amy to ride without fear of loss of balance and is much more comfortable and easier on her muscles.
- Amy was a multi-sport athlete when she was younger and used her bike to get to games/practices and to meet up with friends.
- At her first Bike MS: TOYOTA Best Dam Bike Ride, she made 30 miles total the whole weekend (most riders average 100 to 200 miles) “But I hadn’t felt that free and that accomplished in a long time. It gave me my freedom, my confidence, and my future back ... and I hadn’t even realized it was missing!” This year she plans to stick with the 50-mile routes. “That will allow me to finish the course, and at a reasonable time!”

- Amy is currently saving up for a new recumbent trike because her current one is very heavy and she can't load it/unload it in the truck without her husband, Jason's, assistance. That limits her ability to ride with friends and family unless they come to her.

Possible Photo Opps:

- Amy started participating in 5Ks last fall and she runs at least one organized race each month.
- Amy has a 10-mile route starting and ending at her house that she tries to train on a few times each week.

Multiple sclerosis affects each person differently. Here's how Amy describes the impact of it for her and the considerations she needs to take into account when biking:

"For me, I ride a recumbent trike because my balance is affected and I tire easily. My bike allows me to ride more efficiently. I also wear a cooling vest and have other adaptations to my bike. I have to be very careful to listen to my body and rest when needed. My husband is very good at picking up on my signals - he's a great partner!"

"Weather is always the unpredictable factor. I wear a cooling vest with interchangeable inserts that my support team changes as needed throughout the day. I have icepacks, frozen wash clothes, etc."

Here's how Amy describes Bike MS: TOYOTA Best Dam Bike Ride:

"The blessing of my diagnosis is all the amazing people I've met along this journey. Some of my favorite people are those I've met through Bike MS and only see that weekend."

Here's how Amy describes the I Ride with MS Program:

"I Ride is meaningful because it gives me an opportunity to inspire others ... if I can do it, just about anyone can! And it gives me an opportunity to thank those who are riding!"