

I Ride with MS Ambassador: Pam Dvorak

Age: 45

Hometown: Fitchburg

Bike MS Team: The Flying Monkeys

Diagnosed with relapsing-remitting MS in 1998

Even though Pam Dvorak was told that riding tandem with her husband Corey at their first Bike MS: Best Dam Bike Ride in 2010 would either make or break a relationship, don't read anything into the fact that her goal is to ride by his side this year on a single-seat Wilier instead. That purple Berkley tandem "definitely made our relationship and we still laugh about the challenges we had when we first started," she said, adding "I know I will still need to be his stoker." The ride itself has had an impact too. "Since riding in my first Bike MS, I have realized I CAN do so many things even though I have MS." Her four children, her husband, her fellow Flying Monkeys and even strangers along the route are her cheerleaders. "It is encouraging to hear 'you can do it' and I keep that in mind not only going up hills on the ride, but also when I am struggling with MS symptoms."



Pam Dvorak was featured on last year's Bike MS: TOYOTA Best Dam Bike Ride Team Captain Guide, along with her son Steve (left) and her husband, Corey

More about Pam:

- When she received her MS diagnosis, Pam's first thought was, "I can live with that." "It hasn't been as easy as I thought," she says, "but I am living and enjoying life even when I have relapses."
- Pam's symptoms included numbness and tingling in her feet, restless legs at night, falling down the stairs frequently due to missing the next step, and having her knee suddenly give out. She also would become extremely fatigued, get lightheaded, and feel as if her arms and legs had weights on them when it was hot outside.
- She needed to change the nursing career path she originally intended on (originally she was interested in geriatric psychology) and works part-time as a registered nurse in family medicine, which allows her the time to rest when needed. She also does not drive long distances due to fatigue and vision problems from optic neuritis.
- "Over the years I have grown to appreciate and understand the blessing of this WONDERFUL gift I was given. Since my diagnosis I have learned so many things. I

have learned to slow down, appreciate and enjoy all of the little things in life, and also to take more time to enjoy my family and friends. But the main things I have learned are realizing the courage, strength, and determination I have.”

Possible Photo Opps:

- Pam bikes on trails in the Madison area.
- Pam is also training for her first full marathon, does kundalini yoga, works in her perennial gardens and has recently take up Chi running.

Multiple sclerosis affects each person differently. Here’s how Pam describes the impact in terms of cycling for people with MS:

“People diagnosed with MS need to take the same basic things into consideration when biking such as being sure to hydrate, eat proper nutrition, wear sunscreen and a helmet, and learn to appreciate bike shorts. One thing I always have are disposable ice packs to be used to cool off when it is hot. It is also important to know your limits and always celebrate your victories.”

Here’s how Pam describes Bike MS: TOYOTA Best Dam Bike Ride:

“The Best Dam Bike Ride is a way that all people affected in any way by MS can be part of finding a cure for MS and help others either by riding, volunteering, cheering the riders on, or by donating. I love seeing everyone biking together and helping each other throughout the weekend. The best part though is that it is a way for those struggling with MS to feel AWESOME about who they are and to have others reinforce that AWESOMENESS.”

Here’s how Pam describes the I Ride with MS program:

“The I Ride with MS program is meaningful to me because it is a way to show people what they CAN do when they have the diagnosis of MS. Since riding in my first Best Dam Bike Ride, I have realized I CAN do so many things, even though I have MS.”