



Father and Son Cycle Their Way into the Hearts of Many

Team BikeN' Raises Funds in Honour of 10 Year Old Katherine

With determination you can accomplish anything, but what fuels a person to dig deep, to push their physical limits and achieve a goal? For dad Fernando and brother Daniel.... it's a young girl named Katherine.

Daniel is 12 and is a proud big brother to his sister Katherine. When Daniel and his dad registered for Wheels for The Darling Home for Kids, a cycling event on Sunday June 24th, they knew they wanted to ride in tribute to Katherine. They created team BikeN' and had a fundraising goal of \$750.

Katherine, Daniel's younger sister, is a remarkable 10-year-old girl. She has spastic cerebral palsy, a cortical visual impairment and epilepsy. But it's her incredible smile that captivates everyone's hearts. She loves music (especially the song 'All of Me' by John Legend), the colour red, and her dog Jack, and she has the best laugh in the world!

In February 2018, Fernando and his wife reached out to The Darling Home for Kids. There were very few people these parents trusted to care for their daughter - two to be exact. After years of caring for Katherine on their own, they heard from a friend about The Darling Home for Kids and took the brave first step of exploring respite. It was then their daughter began coming to the Home for respite care, giving her parents a break and time to spend with Daniel. When they saw the charity was holding a cycling event, this father-son team saw it as a way to give back.

On the morning of June 24, Daniel and Fernando woke to a torrential downpour. It was raining so hard that on their way to the start line, the windshield wipers in their car couldn't keep up. Only a third of the participants scheduled to ride that day showed up to registration. Most were deterred by the rain. In fact, it was mostly seasoned riders, including two Olympic athletes.

The opening announcements told participants that instead of riding, they could stay indoors, or drop down to a shorter route. Daniel and Fernando were scheduled to ride 50 kms; of the 76 originally registered, only 24 riders proceeded to the starting line.

The rain didn't deter this dynamic duo. They had a unique determination quite unlike most other cycling teams - they had Katherine back home as their motivation. There was no turning back.

Daniel and Fernando took to the road and began cycling. It was a tough course, and the climb up the escarpment in Milton was gruelling and seemed never-ending. The elevation was over 750 feet so no push of the pedal came easy. Each hill posed a personal challenge but the team

encouraged each other along. The pouring rain offered no reprieve. Kilometre by kilometre they climbed their way to the rest stop at The Darling Home for Kids.

As they rode up the driveway at the halfway point, they were greeted by cheering volunteers and staff and some of the children staying at the Home ventured onto the covered patio. All the other teams and groups were long past the rest stop at that 25 kilometre mark; they were already on their way back down the escarpment to the finish line, leaving only the two of them to finish their ride.

At that rest stop, Daniel and Fernando were offered a shuttle back. They had accomplished a lot and in everyone else's minds, had already achieved success. Father and son contemplated the offer as they snacked on nuts and energy bars, the effects of the first half of the ride visible on their faces. When the shuttle pulled up, dad looked at his son and it was clear neither of them wanted to get on it. As they pedaled off on their bikes from the rest stop they were again cheered on, with a support vehicle close behind in case they needed it.

The duo dug in and took on the remaining half of their ride - Daniel cycling for his little sister and Fernando for his daughter. They were propelled by sheer determination for Katherine; she fights every day through many challenges and today was their day to show the same will and determination. They had to cross the finish line...and they did.

Long after the other riders had crossed the finish line, eaten lunch, listened to speeches and watched a band play, Daniel and Fernando rode through the Wheels archway and finished their 50 km journey.

Team BikeN' raised \$775 for The Darling Home for Kids, surpassing their goal. But much more than that, they showed us what can be accomplished when you have the determination of a 10-year-old girl named Katherine. With that kind of motivation, you can do anything.

Though Daniel and Fernando don't have an award or medal, they are the true champions and an inspiration to everyone who witnessed their journey. Katherine undoubtedly beamed them one of her incredible smiles when they got home. So much so, the father-son pair are already talking about next year's ride...hopefully one with a little more sun than rain!

Some people have reached out to ask if donations are still being accepted for team BikeN'. They have registered for 2019 and anyone inspired by Daniel and Fernando's story can make a donation in support of Katherine, by clicking [here](#).