

Airline high school Alumnus 'Cycled for Independence'

Written by Sonja Bailes

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When he was a senior at Airline High School, Scott Wells could throw a mean fast ball. It was his prowess on the mound that earned the pitcher a baseball scholarship to Southern Arkansas University. Fast forward 11 years later and Wells was thrown a curve ball -- one that left him a paraplegic.

Wells was working for as a South Carolina Corrections Officer when a drunk driver hit the transport van he was driving. He was lucky to live. Wells spent the next two months in the hospital and the next two years in out-patient rehabilitation. While one might expect the once agile baseball player to be bitter, but he is quite the contrary.

"I am a true believer that anyone can do whatever they set their mind to do," Wells said. "The only thing holding them back is their own self-imposed limitations."

Not only does Wells believe that, he practices what he preaches. Saturday, Wells began "Cycling For Independence," a 250-mile journey to Baton Rouge on his hand cycle to raise awareness among lawmakers of the need for a full scale rehabilitation hospital in Shreveport/Bossier.

"The majority of brain and spinal cord injury patients don't have the opportunity to receive care there, because they don't have private insurance and Medicaid doesn't pay outside of the state of Louisiana," Wells said. "I've seen too many people end up in nursing homes as a result, where they don't need to be."

He also believes the distance is too far. "No one should have to travel so far away to get services. It puts a strain on the family and that's when you need support the most."

When Wells embarks on his journey, he will not be alone. Other riders will accompany him.

Prior to the group leaving from Parkway High School, there was a fundraising event for "Independence Regained," the organization Wells founded. Its mission is to not only build a

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rehab hospital but also educate and integrate people with spinal cord and traumatic brain injuries and other neurological disorders back into all aspects of independent life.

For more information, visit <http://www.independenceregained.org>