



# RiDE Allegheny

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*For Immediate Release*

August 4, 2014

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## **Ride Allegheny Raises One Million Dollars for Recovering Veterans**

*Since 2005, the Four Day, 300-Mile Annual Bike Ride  
Has Been Raising Funds for Operation Second Chance*

GAITHERSBURG, Md., August 4, 2014—Ride Allegheny, a locally founded cycling event has been growing rapidly over the past decade. The bike ride was founded in the months preceding the 9-11 attacks as six men from Gaithersburg were slated to embark for Pittsburgh, PA on September 12, 2001. Due to the attacks and the cancellation of train service, the group postponed their ride until the following month. Little did they know that some four years later, they would partner with a fledgling non-profit organization called **Operation Second Chance** who supports wounded men and woman recovering at Walter Reed Army Medical Center. The connection between the 9-11 events and their cause is forever engrained into their unique story. The growth of Ride Allegheny, along with Operation Second Chance has been nothing short of meteoric.

Three of the original six cyclists, Clark Wagner, Walt Ellenberger and Dave Baseheart met Cindy McGrew in 2004 to discuss how their bike ride, now in its fifth year, could help McGrew's Operation Second Chance (OSC), which she had only just founded herself. *"Cindy invited us to a dinner with some of the wounded warriors and their families, which needless to say was a very humbling experience in terms of their positive attitude and appreciation of Cindy's support. Clark, Base and I immediately knew our biking adventure could have a meaningful impact as a fund raiser for OSC and the rest was history - Walt Ellenberger.* McGrew started her efforts by visiting the wounded at Walter Reed and taking care of any of their needs she could handle. She quickly found that her services were in such great demand she felt compelled to start a non-profit organization to obtain additional resources. So the

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partnership was formed and Ride Allegheny (RA #5), held later that year, produced donations of approximately \$16,000 with about 20 riders participating. Each participant is asked to take on their own personal mission to raise funds for OSC. The event has grown tremendously with “the cause” and “the ride” capturing many new comers while bringing back alumni year after year. In 2013 the event raised over \$300,000 with 85 registrants. This year, they now have 100 riders registered and are again looking to clear the \$300,000 mark. According to Dave Baseheart, who is in charge of managing the ride every October, *“this year we’ll have the challenge of accommodating many more riders coming from 14 different states across the country, but we are prepared to give them the ride of their life”*.

OSC has also grown during this period of expansion. They now have a suite of offices in Germantown, MD with a staff of 3, plus interns to carry out their mission. McGrew’s organization is helping many veterans and in all kinds of ways. Here is a typical week: *“This week we paid two mortgage/rent payments for two families that were facing eviction; one utility payment that a family was behind in (double payment). We made flights for a soldier and his wife to go home before his next scheduled surgery. We reimbursed a rental car bill for a family that needed to get to a funeral. We made a flight for a soldier to go home to see his wife. We sent gift grocery cards so a family could buy essential items for themselves.... they only asked for gift cards to buy food for their service dog... we also assisted in getting some supplies for the amputee clinic at the hospital. She went on, “the VA has 600,000 cases back logged.... they really need help”. I had a contractor give me an estimate on some repairs at a soldier's house this week...they have water damage from a leaking pipe. The list goes on and on...*

Operation Second Chance carries out their mission at an overhead level of under 10%. On top of that, Ride Allegheny operates at about the same overhead level allowing 90% of the funds raised to be directly donated to OSC. This week they will pass the \$1,000,000 milestone, something they never envisioned. According to founder Clark Wagner, *“We’ve been very fortunate to have so many great Americans on our Planning Committee and additional volunteers who help each year to pull off this event. These are people who give many hours of their time and truly believe in helping our wounded veterans. We are truly blessed that we can help so many people through this event”*.

For more information on both Ride Allegheny and Operation Second Chance, you can visit their web sites: [rideallegheny.org](http://rideallegheny.org), and [operationsecondchance.org](http://operationsecondchance.org).