



Riding for Focus

THE SPECIALIZED FOUNDATION NEWSLETTER: ISSUE FIVE

Welcome to Issue Five of Riding for Focus. The Specialized Foundation uses cycling as a tool for children to achieve academic, health, and social success. We want the newsletter to be a valuable resource of information for you. Our newsletter archive is on [The Specialized Foundation website](#) so you can read the past four school profiles and all about our current foundation partners and programs.

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RIDING FOR FOCUS

We'd like to extend a sincere "thank you" to all of the schools, nationwide, that submitted applications for The Riding for Focus program for 2017/2018. We've been greatly inspired by the motivations, drive, and diversity of the schools and communities wishing to integrate a cycling program into their school day. We received 142 applications representing schools throughout the US and anticipate announcing the grant recipients in mid-May.

Any grant-related questions can be sent via e-mail to: foundation@specializedfoundation.org

Specialized Foundation [Video](#) + Riding for Focus [Video](#)



School Profile: Evergreen Community Charter School, Asheville, NC



School Mission

Evergreen is a kindergarten through eighth grade public charter school employing the Expeditionary Learning School (ELS) design model. ELS originated from Outward Bound and strives to develop both the character and the intellect of students. Through their commitment to environmental education, Evergreen students become responsible citizens and stewards of the environment and learn what is important for success in life— quality work, responsibility, resourcefulness, respect for others, tenacity, and teamwork.

School Location

Asheville is located in the Blue Ridge Mountains at the confluence of the Swannanoa River and the French Broad River. This mountain town has the awe-inspiring scenery of the Appalachian Mountains and offers a wide diversity of outdoor adventures for a healthy and very active life. You can ride the roads of the Blue Ridge Parkway, and the hundreds of miles of mountain bike trails, both inside and outside the city limits.

Program Overview

The “Evergreen Dirt Squad” rolled out The Riding for Focus program in the fall of 2016. The students ride a minimum of 20 minutes, at a moderate to vigorous intensity, for a minimum of 3 days a week as one of the fitness program goals. Nearby trails are ideal

for the class with diverse terrain. For a graduation ceremony, the school let the students ride the school’s single track so they could show off all the skills they developed. Integrating the Central Michigan University (CMU) curriculum has resulted in robust educational modules that covers bike safety basics 101 to specific riding and skills challenges, cardiovascular fitness & heart rate health, trail etiquette and eco-responsibility to the land.

School Program Champion

Check out this short [video clip](#) that profiles the Evergreen Community Charter School and features testimonies from parents, students, and school champion, Jo Giordano. We had a conversation with Jo Giordano to get more details on how the program was making progress and why she got involved.

Jo began teaching Adventure PE in 2004 and has over 15 years of experience as an educator. She has a Bachelor of Arts degree in Elementary, a Master’s degree in Physical Education

Eight Riding for Focus Schools

Each newsletter will focus on one of the current school programs to give you a snapshot of their progress and highlights to date.

AIM Academy, Conshohocken, PA

Evergreen Community Charter School, Asheville, NC

Montevideo Middle School, Penn Laird, VA

P186X, Walter J. Damrosch, The Bronx, NY

Pinelands Regional Jr. High School, Little Egg Harbor, NJ

Pioneer Valley Regional School, Northfield, MA

Tarkanian Middle School, Las Vegas, NV

Whatcom Middle School, Bellingham, WA



from the University of South Florida, and completed a special program with Colorado Outward Bound School. With her solid leadership experience in rock climbing, skiing, and winter camping, it’s no surprise that he got on a bike and fell in love with riding and sharing her newly learned skills with the students. With her teaching experience in the classroom, she brings academics into the world of physical education. Her goal is to expose students to learning situations through physical activity. Jo attributed her success with coming into the program learning a new skill, too. “I was just like a kid riding flat pedals in Vans shoes and teaching, not as an expert, but someone learning to ride, learning all about derailleurs and cogs and the kids could relate to that.”

How many students in the class

We had 29 students in the fall and spring and no attrition. Students even arrive before the school day starts to ride. We have great support from parents, administrators, community partners, and student athletes who volunteer to help, too. Parents have commented their children are connecting the dots that, when they exercise in the morning, they feel better throughout the day. The kids share that they feel more focused and grades are improving!

Best success about the program

Riding bikes is instilling confidence in the kids and teaching lessons in overcoming barriers. We are thrilled this spring to get some dirt berms built to challenge our students. If I had to single out one lesson—it's patience. There's a lot to learn about bikes, and I tell them that they don't need to see the whole staircase, just take the first step. Their progress is incredible.



Another success is the support we get from our local Specialized retailer, Motion Makers Bicycle Shop. Ben Hinkler, the manager, was the person who sent me the original application and encouraged me to apply. We can even visit the shop on a “rain day” to explore the inner operations of the business and see firsthand what goes on—the kids love it. Ben was at our school every morning, ready to ride when the program started.



Special guest hosts for lessons keep the program fresh and the students attentive. Cameron Brantley of Asheville Cyclocross taught us about training periods, training zones, heart rate thresholds, and fundamentals of cyclocross.



Ben Hinkler, Manager, Motion Makers Bicycle Shop, dedicated supporter of Riding for Focus.

Specialized Dealer Support

Ben Hinkler, Manager of Motion Makers Bicycle Shop in Asheville, NC, has been on board with the program from the start partnering, with school champion, Jo Giordano. Ben has provided everything from bike builds and deliveries to bike maintenance to lending support with trail days and skills classes. When asked if the relationship with the school has had an effect on the shop, Ben commented that the community outreach is apparent, as many parents are now regular customers. But it's really the kids' smiles, not the sales, that are most rewarding. Payback is seeing the kids ride and learn new skills and build confidence. I have kids of my own—the results of riding a bike are that they learn life-long skills in dealing with patience, persistence, and hard work.

Saluting our Foundation Partners

We would like to recognize our key partners and their unique roles within The Specialized Foundation. Thank you to The Department of Physical Education and Sport at Central Michigan University, United Health Group-Optum, and Stanford Medical School and the Center for Interdisciplinary Brain Sciences Research.

Primary Research Partner

Stanford Medical School and the Center for Interdisciplinary Brain Sciences Research

The Center for Interdisciplinary Brain Sciences Research (CIBSR) at the Stanford University School of Medicine is dedicated to research that will improve the lives and well-being of individuals with disorders of the brain and improve knowledge of healthy brain and behavioral development. CIBSR research staff are dedicated to identifying biological and environmental risk factors, understanding disease pathophysiology and developmental outcomes, and developing new treatments for neurodevelopmental, neurogenetic, and neuropsychiatric disorders of childhood onset.

Cycling Program Partner

The Department of Physical Education and Sport at Central Michigan University

Central Michigan's Department of Physical Education and Sport (CMU) provides students with a variety of professional and personal growth options relative to physical activity and sport. Through partnership with CMU, The Specialized Foundation developed the Riding for Focus School Program curriculum to meet national standards for physical education classes.

Performance Improvement Partner

United Health Group - Optum

Optum is the Health Services platform of United Health Group. Optum will be leading the technology tracking component of the Riding for Focus Program nationwide. The data collected will be key in establishing baseline activity and monitoring progress in fitness and performance levels, as well as augmenting the Stanford research led by Dr. Allan Reiss.



Calendar of Upcoming Events

Let's Get Moving!

Special thanks to the Silicon Valley Leadership Group and its successful Lam Research Heart & Soles Run, hosted this past March in Santa Clara, CA. The Specialized Foundation was one of the benefitting non-profits of the run and we're grateful for their support. Heart & Soles funding will assist in the creation of on-campus bike trails, as well as the acquisition of secure bike storage facilities and trailers for transporting bikes between schools for The Riding for Focus program.

May 2017

National Bike Month—Get out and ride! Details at [League of American Bicyclists webpage](#).

August 2017

August 2, Save the Date—The Stanford School of Medicine and The Specialized Foundation will host a Riding for Focus Research Summit at Stanford University. More details in the next issue.

Read All About It:

Every issue, we'll share a few of our favorite reads that dig deep into the science of ADHD and how exercise can be most beneficial to children.

[ADHD and Technology: Helping Our Children Reclaim Their Focus and Attention](#), by Dr. Larry Rosen. Read why "lights out" at night also means turning off all tech devices. Children and teens are supposed to get at least eight hours of sleep for a healthy learning brain.

Take a Hike and Call Me in the Morning

Read all about [Dr. Daphne Miller](#), a physician in San Francisco, who writes "park prescriptions" to encourage patients to get out and exercise to improve your health.

"It turns out I am not alone. I've begun hearing about doctors around the country who are medicating their patients with nature in order to prevent (or treat) health problems ranging from heart disease to attention deficit disorder".

[20 Apps that Can Help Individuals with ADD/ADHD](#)

Mission

The Specialized Foundation uses cycling as a tool for children to achieve academic, health and social success. Through investments in primary scientific medical research and school-based cycling programs, our mission is to increase accessibility to cycling to aid youth in personal development and education.

Join the Movement

[Learn more](#) about our ongoing research and outreach.



Contact Information

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The Specialized Foundation is a 501c3 nonprofit organization that promotes cycling as a tool for children to achieve academic, health, and social success.

