



STRIDE, Inc.

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Challenged Youth Completes First Triathlon

Averill Park, NY – He swims. He runs. He bikes. And he competed in a kid’s triathlon at Grafton State Park at the age of nine. Not so unusual until you realize he has cerebral palsy with a partially paralyzed left side of his body. Lincoln ‘Cole’ Murphy, was born with complications during labor, leaving him with a traumatic brain injury. His birth injury left him with left hemi-paresis, a form of CP that mainly affects his left side. Therefore he doesn’t walk, run, climb stairs, etc. as fast as his peers. He works tremendously hard to keep up. He also suffers from mild hearing and vision loss and a life threatening form of epilepsy that necessitates a trip to the emergency room via ambulance for each seizure. On top of all of this, he’s labeled as a child with a “non-verbal learning disability” which presents a lot like ADHD and has enormous short-term memory implications. School does not come easily to Cole. He’s in an integrated classroom and supported by many gifted and loving teachers and therapists. Still, school is hard. Daily living skills also prove challenging for him. Despite Cole’s adversity, he is a fighter, and now, he is an athlete.

John and Kathy Slyer at SKYHIGH Adventures, run a ‘SHAPE camp’ for children to learn athletics and triathlon competition. They accepted Cole and his sister’s application for the week-long training program without hesitancy.

No one batted an eye as Cole parked his large ‘trike’ next to all the other sleek mountain bikes at the multi-sport triathlon camp. No one seemed to notice, or care, that Cole’s mom pushed him when he rode his bike, or ran beside him on the running path. A few children / young athletes asked why his bike had three wheels, but most just had a quiet understanding that all kids are different – and some need a little more help than others.

The Slyers, USA Triathlon Coaches, and the other coaches at SKYHIGH weren’t fazed. Cole and his sister were treated to a warm reception and then both children were immediately absorbed into the group of young athletes - a beautifully mixed group of tall kids, short kids, very skinny kids and hefty kids, boys and girls of different ages, shades and abilities. And in the middle of them all was one skinny, blond kid with freckles who checked his bag of labels and disabilities at the door.

During the week at triathlon camp Cole happily worked on learning to swim, a very tough task for someone with impaired muscle control. He learned mountain biking skills and he ran everyday. SHAPE Multi-Sport Camp does such a beautiful job of getting the young athletes running by engaging them in motivating field games such as

“Capture the Flag” and “Blob.” Coach John had an almost intuitive way of getting Cole to relax his tight muscles so he could begin to learn swim strokes and kicks.

The camp culminates with a triathlon for kids held at Grafton State Park. On race day, Saturday morning August 2 at 6am, Cole began and completed his first triathlon. Even though the course was modified a bit for him and his mother pushed him up some hills, he knows he’s an athlete, a triathlete, and a winner.

Lincoln ‘Cole’ Murphy is a youth athlete of STRIDE Adaptive Sports, where he also skis and participates in other adaptive activities. Partnering with SKYHIGH Adventure Multi-Sport Camp, the two organizations are seeking support from the community to purchase an adaptive sport tricycle for Cole Murphy to continue multi-sport training and competing. More information about STRIDE can be found at www.stride.org and information about SKYHIGH Adventures SHAPE Camp can be found at www.SHAPecamp.org.

Tax-deductible contributions can be made to:

STRIDE, Inc/ Cole’s Trike Fund
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