

Brazos Valley Special Olympics cycling team celebrates 10-year anniversary

Special Olympics of Texas cycling team encourages physical activity, camaraderie and teamwork

Lillian Haynes, Life & Arts Writer

Road Rascals is a Special Olympics of Texas cycling team based in Brazos Valley. Celebrating its 10-year anniversary, its members work to improve physical fitness, gain independence and spend time with some of their best friends.

The team was founded by David Schmitz, Peggy Zapalac and Sondra White, all parents of boys with Down Syndrome, who felt empowered to begin a Special Olympics cycling team to foster independence and resilience in young adults. They approached coach Randi Daniel, the Head of Delegation for the College Station A Team — meaning she helps manage and represent the team in competitions — to begin a local cycling team.

“They [the coaches] have turned the Rascals from a cycling team into a community,” Daniel said. “That is my favorite way to describe the Rascals ... they take care of each other, they give each other rides, they celebrate each other even outside of Road Rascals.”



Hannah Harrison / ESPN Images

Members of the Road Rascals ride their bikes down a road at RELLIS on Saturday, April 26, 2025. (Rocio Salgado/The Battalion)

ADVERTISING

Administered by the College Station Independent School District, the team rides each year from February through May, with competitions including the Area 6 Spring Games in April and the Summer Games in May. Practicing multiple times a week in their signature green shirts, members of the team learn to navigate a variety of terrains while managing obstacles such as other bikes, crosswalks and pedestrians.

"The Special Olympics, at its core, is about competition," Daniel said. "But ... when the Road Rascals do their practices they are not practicing to compete, they are practicing to provide fitness and wellness."

Daniel explained that although the endurance of racing is incorporated into the competition the Road Rascals do not just race around a track at every practice. Instead, they go out into the community to learn how to practice safe biking in day-to-day situations.

"That is definitely a unique piece to the Rascals," Daniel said. "They're promoting the whole athlete and not just the competitive piece of Special Olympics."

White said the group is always looking for new trails and bike paths to cross in town.

"We have three major goals when we ride as a team," White said. "First safety, then learning cycling skills to be independent and build

strength and, finally, to have fun. Last weekend one of our groups rode more than 12 miles at the Texas A&M RELLIS campus."

White said it has been exciting for both herself and the other coaches to watch the Rascals grow over time.

"When my son Quentin was born in 1998, I was told he would never ride a bike," White said. "That set me on an immediate path to prove them wrong. What started as a way to keep our sons on their bikes has turned into a passion project for all of us."

The most experienced Rascals compete in community cycling events, including the 20-mile CHI St. Joseph Health Gran Fondo. Allison Dohrman has been competing in the Special Olympics since she was 12 years old, and began riding with the Road Rascals in 2018.

"I joined Road Rascals because ... my friends were in it so I wanted to spend more time with them," Dohrman said. "Once I learned how to ride my bike I really enjoyed [cycling] because it gave me more freedom and independence."

A testament to her dedication to the sport, she was one of eight cyclists chosen to represent the United States at the 2023 Special Olympics World Games in Berlin, Germany.

"Road Rascals has been a great way for me to see my friends, stay active and healthy, learn teamwork and build up my confidence that I can do hard things if I give it my best effort," Dohrman said. "I love cheering on my friends and being part of a team."



A member of the Road Rascals rides her bike at RELLIS on Saturday, April 26, 2025. (Rocio Salgado/The Battalion)



A group of Road Rascals members ride their bikes down the road at RELLIS on Saturday, April 26, 2025. (Rocio Salgado/The Battalion)

certified coaches, with the organizers continuing to advocate for more volunteers to help with the rides.

"We are always looking for volunteers who love to ride bikes, own a bike and a helmet, can transport their bike and have a heart for people with special abilities," White said. "It takes energy, patience, understanding and lots of love."

The team receives generous donations and support from Coach Blair Charities as well as through the Brazos Valley Booster Club, known as the Aggie Bombers.

Daniel explained how the family formed by Road Rascals is a great opportunity for young adults to develop the skills needed to succeed in their everyday lives.

"The Special Olympics are more than just a sport," Daniel said. "It's about the athletes ... learning more about each other and their abilities, rather than what they're not able to do. Road Rascals does a phenomenal job about promoting that independence."

Classified as an open team, Road Rascals accepts athletes as young as 8-years old. Heather Segrest, one of the newer coaches on the team and a mom to two elementary-aged Road Rascals, Louis and George, said the group has helped her boys overcome obstacles.

"[Road Rascals] is a big community and they take care of you," Segrest said. "They make sure everybody has an opportunity to ride."

The team now comprises 33 athletes and six