

The Village

AT PENN STATE



Above: Members of the University Women's Club Cycling Group cheer for Jerry as he completes his 800th lap.

Cycling for a Cause:

A Birthday Worth Celebrating

Birthdays are the perfect time for celebration. For resident at The Village at Penn State, Jerry Gross, his 83rd birthday was a festive event for the entire community, especially those in need. Dedicating his birthday to a deserving cause, Jerry set out to raise money for the Centre County YMCA's anti-hunger campaign.

"I was inspired by a 100 year-old World War II veteran that I saw on the news," Jerry explains. This veteran celebrated his 100th birthday by walking 100 laps around his property to raise money for charity. "I thought, well that seemed pretty easy and I wondered what I could do."

Jerry has always been an active person and greatly enjoys activities like jogging, hiking, and cycling. Several years ago when Jerry experienced difficulties with his hip and knees both jogging and hiking became quite painful. It was then that Jerry chose to step up his cycling adventures. "Biking, because it is low-impact, was a good way for me to stay active," he reflects.

As Jerry tried to think of ways he could raise money for the YMCA, he knew cycling would be the perfect activity.

"My 83rd birthday was coming up, and 83 laps seemed far too modest," he explains. "We decided on 830 and thought if we can raise one dollar per lap that will be 830 dollars."

Tremendously exceeding his initial goal, Jerry began his cycling fundraiser in April and successfully completed his 830 laps before his birthday on June 27th. Raising over 5,000 dollars for the Centre County YMCA, Jerry was thrilled with the fundraiser's success and was happy to support this cause for families in need of food amidst COVID-19.

As Jerry's fundraiser provided tremendous support to the YMCA, he couldn't have completed his goal without the financial and moral support of residents and staff from around The Village. "I was amazed that in the midst of a pandemic someone had so much compassion for others," says Director of Resident Services, Kim McGinnis. "It was truly inspiring."

To celebrate his last three laps, residents and staff at The Village gathered together safely at a distance. With champagne, cupcakes, and a birthday cake, the socially distant group cheered Jerry on as he crossed the finish line. Even with their masks on, you could hear their spirit throughout the community.

"It meant a lot when residents would cheer me on as I did my laps. I think what I did contributed to good spirits through this pandemic," Jerry reflects. Lifting spirits and morale, Jerry's cycling for a cause certainly brought hope to this community. When asked what he'll do for his 84th birthday, Jerry says he's unsure, but perhaps another cycling event for charity is in his future.