

## Wheelchair-bound John Abendroth organizes bike drive for Eagle Scout project

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*Bowie native John Abendroth, who is wheelchair-bound after a cycling accident two years ago, wants to collect 100 bikes to donate to the Bikes for the World organization in order to complete his requirements to become an Eagle Scout. He and some friends will be collecting old bikes and parts at New Hope Family Church in Bowie on August 20, from 9 a.m. to 1 p.m.*

When Bowie's John Abendroth was injured in a near-fatal bicycle accident two years ago, he figured his plan to become an Eagle Scout would have to be scrapped.



He was on the cusp of achieving the prestigious ranking, needing only to complete his final service project. But most of the final projects aspiring Eagle Scouts undertake involve building something. Abendroth's options were limited because the accident — he was hit by a car not far from his home — left the 19-year-old in a wheelchair.

"There were a few different project ideas that came up," he said. "A lot of scouts build things, but I obviously can't do that. I had nothing in mind at the time"

At one point, a friend suggested a bike drive — collecting old bicycles and parts to donate to charity — and Abendroth brightened.

"I like the bikes [idea] because it's something that I'm passionate about," Abendroth said.

The choice made sense. Bikes have always been a big part of life in the Abendroth home. John is a youngest of five brothers, one of whom works in a bike shop. Another rides in triathlons and yet another rode his bike all the way across the country. When he was injured in the accident, John was riding a bike he'd put together himself, using parts from a couple of different models.

"We have a lot of history with biking in this family," he said.



Abendroth contacted the Bikes for the World organization, which is based in Arlington, Va. to learn how he might join forces with the group.

According to its web site, the organization is dedicated to making "quality used bicycles and parts affordable and available to lower income people and select institutions in developing countries, to enhance their lives and livelihoods through better transport."

Abendroth loved the organization's concept, and likes the idea that old and idle bikes will be put to good use. "Even in the tiniest ways, they can affect peoples lives," he said. "The bikes they donate can go to third-world countries and remote villages. People there can use them to get to work, or to get medicine to people."

Abendroth already has visited a couple of local bike shops seeking donations, and has a dozen bikes in the backyard already. He and some friends plan to go door to door on Tuesday, handing out fliers and asking for more donations.

Abendroth's big push will be the bike drive he's hosting August 20 at New Hope Family Church in Bowie, from 9 a.m. to 1 p.m. He's hoping to collect 100 bikes.

Those who know him are delighted he's resumed his pursuit of Eagle Scout status.

"It certainly speaks to the reality that John is optimistic and has a great spirit," said Jim Boothby, the scoutmaster for Troop 1212. Boothby called Abendroth "one of the most — if not the most — dynamic and wonderful guys in the whole pack."

Boothby took it upon himself to get Abendroth a rare extension from the Boy Scouts of America so that he could complete his quest for Eagle Scout status.

"We were glad and happy to do it for John," he said.