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## ***Dream Team Policies & Guidelines***

### **The Des Moines Register, YMCA & Bike World Dream Team Des Moines, Iowa**

***Mission:*** The Dream Team uses the power of a bicycle to assist youth in developing a positive approach to life's challenges.

***Background:*** In 1973, two Des Moines Register columnists challenged themselves to ride their bicycles across Iowa. This challenge started what would become the largest, longest and oldest bicycle-touring event in the world. The Des Moines Register has sponsored an annual bicycle ride across Iowa since that year. The event is known as RAGBRAI (Register's Annual Great Bike Ride Across Iowa™). What started as a ride with a group of casual friends has grown to include thousands of people of all ages, from all across the country and various parts of the world.

In 1996, a concern for disadvantaged and at risk youth caused a small group of Des Moines cyclists (Jim Green, Herb Rogers, Frank Owens, Forrest Ridgway and J. D. Hall) to discuss how these youngsters could participate in RAGBRAI. They wanted youth who otherwise would not have the opportunity to experience the sense of fellowship, accomplishment and goal setting that participation in RAGBRAI brings. They also wanted to get them off the streets and away from non-productive activities. Working as a grassroots organization, they successfully obtained equipment, recruited and trained youth to participate in Dream Team activities in 1997. This group rode along with their adult mentors on RAGBRAI XXV, as the first "Dream Team."

The Des Moines Register & RAGBRAI, Bike World and Dream Team mentor John Reese are primarily responsible for securing resources and funding for The Dream Team. The Des Moines Wellmark YMCA has worked hand in hand with the Register and Bike World in providing its resources for Dream Team activities since the beginning. A non-profit organization, known as PACE (Porter Avenue Center for Education) provides support through some of its staff and several PACE youth have participated in Dream Team activities.

In recent years, The Success Program of the Des Moines Public Schools has provided support through staff and youth participants.



### KEY TERMS & PHRASES

**Age Requirements** - the minimum age at which The Dream Team will accept a youth for participation in Dream Team activities. (See Eligibility, page 5.)

**Applications** - for participation will include a Dream Team Information Form, Dream Team Pledge and a Liability Release Form.

**Chairperson** – a member of the Leadership Committee designated as the lead mentor.

**Cut-off Date** - refers to the date applications must be submitted in order for a youth to participate in Dream Team activities. The cut-off date is currently April 1. Any youth wishing to join the team after this date must submit to an interview to determine whether he or she should be allowed to participate.

**Dream Team Leadership Committee** - governs the operation of The Dream Team under the direction of the Chairperson. The Committee is responsible for fund raising, recruitment, training, publicity and other administrative tasks.

**Individual Assessments** - the purpose is to observe the youth throughout training so that we can address deficiencies as they occur. Our goal is to get as many youth participating to complete training and RAGBRAI. When we recognize a deficiency, we must point it out to the youth so that it can be addressed.

**Mentors** — individuals from the charing committee and members selected by the committee who ride and train with the youth. The minimum age to be eligible as a mentor is age 21 by the start of RAGBRAI.

**Participants** - A participant is any person who rides with or is involved in the Dream Team's preparation for RAGBRAI. It includes the youth, committee members and Mentors.

**Targeted Youth** - refers to youth recruited for the Dream Team. They are targeted due to their environment, financial condition, race and/or juvenile delinquency and have been determined to be "at risk youth". In general, these are youth who would not normally have the opportunity to participate in RAGBRAI.

**Training** - Training is that which all youth are required participate. Youth are required to complete a minimum amount of training in order to participate in RAGBRAI. Training takes place at the Wellmark YMCA beginning in February. Outdoor riding will begin as soon as weather permits and rides will leave from The Register building.



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**Training Rides** - Training rides are set-up by the Ride Coordinator to prepare participants for RAGBRAI. Rides will begin as soon as weather permits and bikes are available, usually around early April. Rides are scheduled for three times a week. One training ride will take place on Monday, another on Thursday and another Saturday.

**Recruitment** - Recruitment will be conducted in geographic areas of the city which will produce the targeted youth. Committee members will recruit at identified schools as well as approach individual youth who may be interested in becoming a member of The Dream Team.

### **SELECTION OF COMMITTEE MEMBERS**

Committee Members also serve as Mentors for The Dream Team. Members of the Committee are selected from referrals by Committee Members. Members and potential members must have a genuine concern for the well-being and success of youth.

Committee Members are committed year round to The Dream Team and receive no monetary compensation. Committee members are committed to bringing out the best in Dream Team youth. They are committed to encouraging good and discouraging bad behavior and providing the guidance, instruction and discipline required to achieve that goal.

### **SELECTION OF YOUTH**

Youth participating on The Dream Team are selected from referrals to The Dream Team Committee. The number of Mentors available to participate in supervision of the youth will limit the number of youth allowed.

The Committee will not prohibit youth who are not at risk from participating on the Dream Team. However, in the event youth exceed the number of Mentors available, targeted youth will be given preference. The Committee requests that those families who can cover the expense of his/her child(ren) should contribute to the cost of the child's/children's expense for RAGBRAI.

### **EQUIPMENT AND ATTIRE**

Participants shall wear appropriate clothing during all training and events. Attire deemed appropriate shall include biking shorts, biking tights, biking shirts, T-shirts and athletic shoes. Loose fitting clothing is not appropriate and youth will not be allowed to participate after being warned that their clothing is not acceptable for training. At no time will any youth be allowed to train or ride on RAGBRAI without a shirt. Participants shall wear helmets at all times during training rides and RAGBRAI.



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An eligible youth will receive the use of necessary equipment and attire to complete RAGBRAI. Equipment, attire and food are purchased with donations received from individuals, bike teams and businesses. Some equipment and attire is also donated by various businesses.

As a reward for successful completion of RAGBRAI, all youth, excluding previous Dream Team Members and youth who are not considered to be at risk, will receive a bike. All members, at the completion of RAGBRAI, will be allowed to keep their helmet, biking gloves, team bike jersey and bike shorts.

Youth are encouraged to maintain their equipment and attire in an acceptable condition. Youth will be properly instructed on bicycle safety and equipment care and needs.

### ***RIDING ETIQUETTE***

Involves respect for fellow riders and others on the road; riding sensibly and not recklessly. The Dream Team adheres to the principles of riding etiquette set forth in the RAGBRAI brochure, "RIDE RIGHT®".

### ***CAMPING TRIPS***

Overnight camping training rides are a great opportunity for team building and training. Youth are expected to attend all camping functions, unless they are excused in advance from the outing. Youth must attend 2 of the three campouts in order to participate in RAGBRAI. Youth must learn how to set up and dismantle a tent properly and clean up the campsite. Male and female youth will occupy separate tents. There is no dating during a camping trip or on RAGBRAI. Youth will observe curfews and meet expectations established by Mentors for lights out, sleeping arrangements, proper sleeping attire and tent checks.

Youth must notify a Mentor when leaving the campsite or leaving the camping area. All youth must be accompanied by a Mentor when leaving the campsite. Youth are discouraged from horseplay of any type. All youth will eat with the Dream Team during meals unless express permission is given to the contrary.

### ***ELIGIBILITY***

The Dream Team is limited to individuals who meet eligibility requirements for participation. Eligibility is based upon youth who are at risk and have completed the registration process prior to the RAGBRAI's registration deadline and youth who have successfully completed The Dream Team's training program.





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To be eligible, youth must be at least 13 years of age and under 19 years of age by the start of RAGBRAI. Youth must also either still be in high school, or recently graduated from high school in order to participate in RAGBRAI.

We recognize that some youth mature sooner than others both mentally and physically. Therefore, we will accept youth who are younger, provided they have demonstrated that they are mentally and physically capable of handling training requirements. However, The Dream Team will not accept a youth for participation in Dream Team activities if he or she is younger than 12 years of age at the time he or she wishes to sign up for Dream Team activities.

### ***ATTENDANCE***

All youth are required to participate in all training and attendance is important. No youth will be allowed more than four (4) absences per month and no more than one on a Saturday.

The Leadership Committee has the decision-making authority for dismissing youth from the program for attendance.

### ***DISMISSAL OF YOUTH FROM PROGRAM***

A youth's behavior alone will not disqualify him or her from participation in Dream Team activities. Since our targeted youth are considered to be troubled youth and many have disciplinary problems, we would not be doing them any good if we allowed them to use their behavior to escape a little hard work. Behavior problems will be dealt with in a way which demonstrates that obedience is better served.

The Leadership Committee maintains the right to dismiss a youth from the Team in the event the youth has acted in any way deemed to be intolerable, offensive to other youth or considered to be detrimental to The Dream Team. Dismissal from The Dream Team is a last resort after all other attempts to conform the youth's behavior have failed.

A youth may only be dismissed following a full discussion by the Leadership Committee of the behavior, and then only after alternative measures have been employed and proven futile. In considering whether or not a youth should be dismissed, the nature of the conduct and the seriousness of the behavior must be addressed. All reasonable efforts must be taken to correct the behavior by the Leadership Committee before the youth is dismissed from the program.

Prior to dismissal, it must be determined that the youth has a problem not just with an individual. His or her behavior must be such that it defeats the objectives of the



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program. In the event law enforcement becomes involved, under the appropriate circumstances, the youth will be summarily dismissed from the Team.

### ***BEHAVIOR EXPECTATIONS***

Participants must obey all laws. This means no smoking or drinking if the youth is under age. Drugs will not be allowed. Any unauthorized use of drugs will result in the immediate dismissal from the Dream Team. All medications are to be administered through Mentors certified to administer medication. Youth will adhere to all curfews and group check in times.

### ***PARENTAL/GUARDIAN INVOLVEMENT***

Parents/Guardians are encouraged to support youth in their participation and be involved in social activities sponsored to recruit youth. Parents/Guardians shall advise a Mentor before removing a child from the training site to ensure that the child's whereabouts are known. Parents/Guardians must provide transportation for youths to and from Dream Team activities. Parents/Guardians may not act as Mentors for The Dream Team. Youth are to be independent of parents/guardians during rides and RAGBRAI.

### ***COMMUNITY INVOLVEMENT***

The Dream Team welcomes support from community groups and as support systems or youth referrals. The Dream Team welcomes the opportunity to become involved in community efforts and will be presented in an honorable and respectable manner.

### ***HEALTH AND MEDICAL CONCERNS***

The Dream Team reserves the right to deny a youth's participation based upon health and medical concerns. Each youth will be accepted to the team on an individual basis and all medical and health concerns will be considered at that time.

Each youth's parent or guardian shall notify The Dream Team of any health or medical issues prior to participation and sign a waiver upon being accepted into the program. Each youth shall be reviewed to determine if there is any health or medical concerns that should be addressed. Participants and their parent(s) or guardian(s) assume all risk before, during and after any Dream Team event.

### ***MEALS AND SNACKS***

Snacks may be provided to youth on some training rides. Dream Team meals will be provided on RAGBRAI and campouts.