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## PRESS RELEASE

### For Immediate Release - October 10, 2011

The Friedreich's Ataxia Research Alliance (FARA), in partnership with The FA Project, Catrike, Anna Maria Oyster Bar, and The Melting Pot are pleased to announce Bill Ramsey, Tom Trovinger, Mary Vida, and Patrick Cogan as the 2011 Ataxian Athlete Initiative (AAI) grant recipients.

The AAI is managed by Ride Ataxia – a FARA program. Part of the mission of Ride Ataxia is to promote active lifestyles among people with disabilities by providing adaptive cycling equipment to people affected by Ataxia – a progressive, life-shortening neuromuscular disease. The 2011 AAI was funded by The FA Project, Catrike, Anna Maria Oyster Bar, and The Melting Pot.

The AAI is administered through a competitive grant application process. Applicants submitted an essay summarizing their experience with Ataxia and their efforts to stay active with the condition. Individuals then selected the most appropriate adaptive cycling equipment to suit their abilities and described how such equipment would help them to reach their fitness goals. AAI grants are awarded based on the merit of the applications, resources requested and resources available for funding.

The AAI program has experienced substantial growth in both funding and number of applications since its 2009 inception.

### 2011 Ataxian Athlete Initiative Award Recipients

**Bill Ramsey** is a 54 year old Virginia resident who has been handcycling since February 2009. Through the 2011 AAI, Bill will receive partial funding for a Top End Force R Handcycle.

Bill States, "I have two principle goals. The first is to demonstrate to other people that a disability doesn't mean you are inactive. Secondly, handcycling greatly enhances my life by improving my physical, mental and emotional health and I'm wired to take it as far as possible."

**Tom Trovinger** is a 36 year old Maryland native who was diagnosed with Friedreich's ataxia 15 years ago and has recently been heavily involved with the Ataxia community. Through the 2011 AAI Tom will receive funding for a Catrike Villager recumbent trike.

Tom states, "Since my diagnosis, FA has slowly been stealing my ability to do the things I love, such as participate in athletics. However I will not let FA steal from me without fighting it every day."



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**Mary Vida** is a 41 year old Florida resident who has been living with Friedreich's ataxia for 20 years. Through the 2011 AAI Mary will receive partial funding for a Top End Excelerator XLT Handcycle.

Mary States, "I took a friend's hand cycle for a test ride and got to experience something amazing. There are no words to describe the feeling of riding in the road without your wheel-chair."

**Patrick Cogan** is a 27 year old graduate of Salem State University who was diagnosed with Friedreich's ataxia in November 2010. Patrick recently completed the Philadelphia Livestrong challenge bike ride on an entry level trike in honor of his father. Through the 2011 AAI Patrick will receive funding for a Catrike Trail recumbent trike.

Patrick states, "It was as if the world was saying 'you can't ride a bike, you can't even walk.' When people tell me I can't do something I am that much more motivated to do it. I completed the 20 mile Philly ride in just less than three hours."

### **About FARA**

The Friedreich's Ataxia Research Alliance (FARA) is a 501(c)(3), non-profit, charitable organization dedicated to accelerating research leading to treatments and a cure for Friedreich's ataxia. [curefa.org](http://curefa.org)

### **About Ride Ataxia**

Ride Ataxia Cycling Events support research for Friedreich's ataxia; a disease with no treatment, no cure, no hope...until now. In 2010, the Ride Ataxia program hosted 4 rides welcoming over 1,000 riders of all abilities who helped raise \$400,000 for FA research. Ride Ataxia locations include Davis, CA, Dallas, TX, Philadelphia, PA, and Orlando, FL. [rideataxia.org](http://rideataxia.org)

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