



## PRESS RELEASE

### FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

#### **Cyclist with Rare Neuromuscular Disorder to Begin Third Cycling Journey from Portland**

March 9, 2009— Sacramento native Kyle Bryant and a team of 65 riders will leave from the Oregon Health & Science University (OHSU) campus Monday, March 16 at 9 a.m. beginning a cycling journey to draw attention and raise research funds for the rare neuromuscular disorder Friedreich's ataxia- with which Bryant and other teammates are affected. It will be a 4-day trip covering 200 miles.

The riders will begin assembling for their third annual cycling journey at 7 a.m. at the Center of Health and Healing on the OHSU Campus in Portland, Oregon, and will kick off the ride with addresses from Bryant, episodic ataxia researchers at OHSU- Dr. John Nutt and Dr. James Maylie as well as Dr. Lawrence Schut- the National Ataxia Foundation's Medical Director. There will also be a photo opportunity prior to the team's departure.

Bryant and Team Ride Ataxia will conclude their ride in Seattle, WA on March 19, 2009 at the National Ataxia Foundation's 52nd Annual Meeting being held at the Doubletree Hotel Seattle Airport.

Bryant stated, "In 2009 Ride Ataxia looks forward to continued success raising awareness, collaboratively funding research, and empowering ataxians and others to seek their fitness goals and have fun doing it."

Bryant and Team Ride Ataxia have cycled 3,100 miles cross country in the past two years. In 2007, Bryant and his father, Mike Bryant completed a 2,400 mile bike ride visiting FA researchers and patient families from La Jolla, California to Memphis, Tennessee. In March 2008, the Bryants were joined by many new teammates including 6 ataxians on their bike ride from Sacramento, California to Las Vegas, Nevada.

The funds raised by the team on their cross-country "Ride Ataxia" have gone directly to the annual Kyle Bryant Research Award for translational research in FA. In 2008, the

the annual Kyle Bryant Research Award for translational research in FA. In 2008, the team raised \$142,000 and the National Ataxia Foundation and the Friedreich's Ataxia Research Alliance added sufficient funds to bring the award total to \$250,000. Ride Ataxia, NAF and FARA co-funded two \$125,000 awards in 2008. One award was made to Repligen Corporation, Waltham MA, which in collaboration with an international team of researchers is advancing compounds called HDAC inhibitors that target increased levels of frataxin – the protein that is severely reduced in FA. The second award went to a team of investigators at Ohio State University, Drs. Subha V. Raman and Roula al-Dahhak, who propose a series of sophisticated imaging studies to better understand, prevent and treat heart disease in FA.

NAF Executive Director Michael Parent commented, "NAF is excited to again partner with Kyle Bryant, Team Ride Ataxia and FARA for the third annual cycling journey. NAF applauds Kyle and Team Ride Ataxia for their continued efforts to support vital Friedreich's ataxia research and enhance ataxia awareness. NAF looks forward to collaborating again this year with FARA to help accelerate important translational research in FA. "

FARA President Ron Bartek added, "Kyle Bryant, his family and his Ride Ataxia teammates are real difference makers. These courageous, resourceful and dedicated people have made their cycles into vehicles of change that have vastly expanded the horizons of awareness regarding Friedreich's ataxia and have significantly increased financial support for Friedreich's ataxia research. FARA is deeply grateful to Kyle and Team Ride Ataxia and looks forward to the 2009 Team Ride Ataxia/FARA/NAF collaboration that will once again focus increased awareness and resources on the research that will result in treatments and a cure."

Outback Steakhouse is a proud supporter of Friedreich's ataxia research through sponsorship of this year's Ride Ataxia journey. Jon Lakefish, Director of Franchise Marketing for the Evergreen Restaurant Group stated, "All our Outback Steakhouse locations in the Northwest are raising funds to help with Friedreich's ataxia research funding and several of our restaurants are looking forward to treating Team Ride Ataxia to a wonderful dinner during each night of the ride. This is an amazing event to be a part of and together we can build awareness for FA and raise funds that are needed to help find a cure." Several Outback employees have also joined the Ride Ataxia cycling team for the trip from Portland to Seattle.

Team Ride Ataxia has set a goal of raising \$100,000 towards research for Friedreich's ataxia in 2009. For information about the Ride or to make a donation please visit <http://www.rideataxia.org>

Friedreich's ataxia (FA) is a debilitating, life-shortening, degenerative neuro-muscular disorder. Onset of symptoms can vary from childhood to adulthood and can include muscle weakness and loss of coordination in the arms and legs; impairment of vision, hearing and speech; aggressive scoliosis (curvature of the spine); diabetes, and a serious heart condition. The progressive loss of coordination and muscle strength leads to motor incapacitation and the full-time use of a wheelchair. Childhood onset of FA is usually between the ages of 5 and 15 and tends to be associated with a more rapid progression. There is currently no treatment or cure.

#### **About FARA**

The Friedreich's Ataxia Research Alliance (FARA) is a 501(c)(3) non-profit charitable

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. <http://www.curefa.org>

#### **About NAF**

NAF is a membership supported, nonprofit organization established in 1957 to help persons with ataxia and their families. The Foundation's primary purpose is to support promising ataxia research and to provide vital programs and services for ataxia families. <http://www.ataxia.org>

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