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To Whom It May Concern:

The Joseph Sams School needs adaptive bicycles (with accessories) for their students. The bicycles that are at the school now cannot be ridden by all the students. There are many advantages to having the adaptive bicycles at school.

Riding a bicycle provides many health related advantages for special needs children. They can help each child increase their cardiovascular health, increase their range of motion, increase their overall body strength, increase coordination and increase reciprocal movements in their legs. An adaptive bicycle allows a child to work while actually having fun! Since most of the children have therapy on a weekly basis, having the bicycle at school would provide them an excellent incentive to work even harder during therapy.

Having an adaptive bicycle at the school could also have many emotional advantages for the children. The accessories needed to allow all children to ride the bicycles are very important. With the right accessories, every child, regardless of ability, is able to ride a bicycle. The feeling of accomplishment of being able to ride a bike is an awesome confidence builder for all children. The feeling of inclusion of being able to ride a bike with their peers is a gift that a bike with the appropriate accessories can provide. There is a feeling of freedom that comes from riding a bike that is clearly understood through a child's smile and laughter as they ride.

For some children school may be the only place that they would be able to ride a bike. The adaptive bikes with all of the accessories needed for a severely disabled child are very expensive. Most families cannot afford to buy one of these bicycles for their home.

Our family was blessed by The Variety Children's Foundation when they gave an adaptive bicycle to our daughter. This wonderful gift not only benefitted our daughter in all the ways mentioned, but was also a gift for our entire family. Our daughter is now able to ride bikes with her twin sister! We take her bike on family rides, walks at the park, family vacations and reunions, to her grandparent's house and for use during therapy sessions.

In addition to all the physical health and emotional advantages listed for all children, our bicycle helps to reduce our daughter's spasticity and increases the efficiency of her movements. The cycling motion helps stretch her hip flexors, hamstring and heel cords; all which are areas of previous surgeries. Any time she spends on her bicycle helps increase her strength in her entire body especially her arms, legs, trunk and head.

Having adaptive bicycles at The Joseph Sams School would benefit not only the students but the teachers, therapists and parents and siblings of every child in the school today and for years to come.

Stacey Caldwell