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Pi Kappa Phi Student Prepares to Embark on a 'Journey of Hope'

February 18, 2019

HIGHLIGHTS

- Brandon Dill is a senior computer science and information systems major from Easley, South Carolina.
- The Journey of Hope ride is approximately 3,500 miles.



ROCK HILL, SOUTH CAROLINA — **Brandon Dill's** trying to get comfortable with biking next to big trucks on the open road.

"I've been riding on the road when I can," said the Winthrop University senior. "It's still hard to get used to a semi-truck passing within five feet of me, but I'm a lot calmer now. ...I'm about 70 percent prepared. The rest, I'm winging it."

He'll need that calm this June, when he'll bike approximately 3,500 miles from California to Washington, D.C., to raise money and awareness for **The Ability Experience**, the philanthropy initiative owned and operated by his fraternity, Pi Kappa Phi.

The non-profit creates experiences for people with disabilities, such as accessible playground/recreation equipment and summer camps, because "disability doesn't mean inability," Dill explained. He has a personal connection to the story as well: his older sister was paralyzed from the waist down in a car accident.

One of The Ability Experience's largest fundraisers is the cross-country bike ride called Journey of Hope. Dill, a **computer science and information systems major** from Easley, South Carolina, heard about the fundraiser from the CEO at the national Pi Kappa Phi gathering. He was interested in riding, but held himself back – until the CEO sat down next to him and asked, "Why wouldn't you [sign up]?"

Dill turned to his faith in God for the answer.

"God's wanting me to do something," he said. "He's given me a job right after graduation, so he wants me to do something now."

For the past several months, Dill's trained hard for the ride – working out in the West Center, biking outdoors, learning about nutrition and safety through webinars, working with Winthrop's athletic trainers and more.

He's also fundraising \$6,000, all of it going straight to The Ability Experience.

"Winthrop's shown me so much support," he said, adding that several students, faculty and staff members have contributed to the cause, including President Dan Mahony and College of Business Administration Dean P.N. Saksena.

Dill will be one of only 90 fraternity members nationwide participating in the ride. Riders will cycle approximately 75 miles a day, except for some "Century Days," in which they'll bike 100 miles. In between, they'll lodge at YMCAs, churches and more for "friendship visits."

"We will be dancing and enjoying the gift of life at friendship visits that support people with disabilities," he said. "Whether it be a game of basketball, singing at the top of our lungs or making arts and crafts, I hope to impact the lives of those that are far too often cast to the outskirts of society."

Donations are still being accepted [via the website](#). He'll also be posting ride updates on his [Instagram](#).

'Wherever my heart and God take me'

Dill originally wanted to go into the military and joined the JROTC in high school. Winthrop wasn't originally on his college list, but when a friend visited for a campus tour, Dill decided to come along.

"I walked around campus; I'd had an idea of what I pictured the scene of college to be, and that was Winthrop," he said.

He combined his love of people and computers for his major, "using the strengths God gave me." He's studied abroad in Italy. He's served as an Orientation Leader, voting ambassador and Emerging Leader, and on the Interfraternity Council, Fraternal Conduct Board and Student Judicial Council. He's active in the Reformed University Fellowship campus ministry group and with his fraternity.

"Winthrop's Pi Kappa Phi chapter changed my idea of a fraternity and how it can help people," Dill said.

During his time at Winthrop, he interned at SCE&G and at Accenture in Chicago. After graduation and Journey of Hope, he'll start his job as a security consultant for Accenture's Charlotte location.

And after that?

"Wherever my heart and God take me," Dill said.

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