

# Riding with hope

Hubbard man with Parkinson's receives national award

BY JUSTIN ITES  
ites@iafalls.com

**P**arkinson's disease is a degenerative disorder of the central nervous system that can impair a person's motor skills, speech and other physical functions.

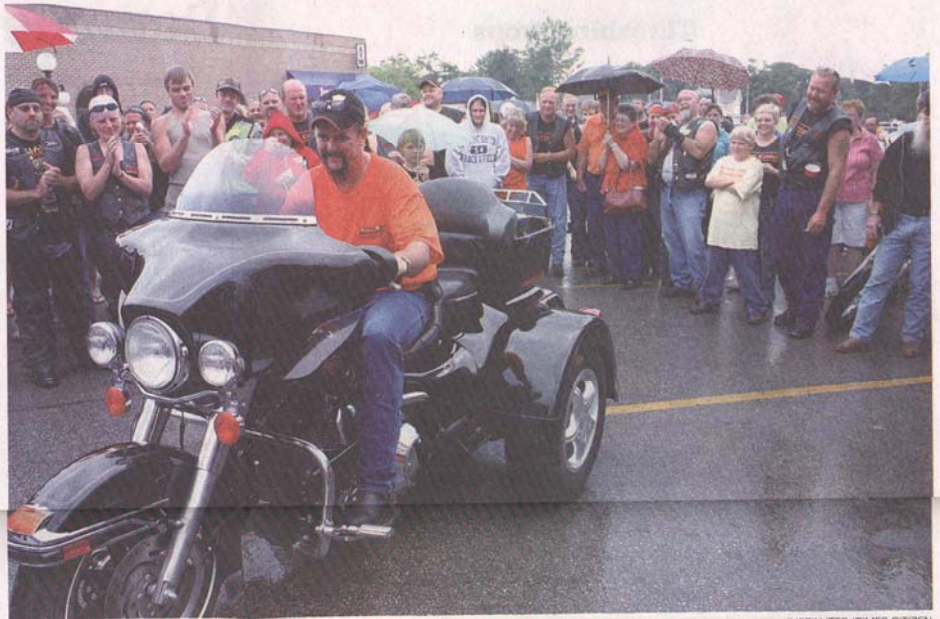
Hubbard resident Chad Pierson received his diagnosis two years ago, but that has not stopped him from doing what he loves to do — ride motorcycles.

As the disease has pro-



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**Pierson thanked his friends for their support.**

gressed over time, Pierson noticed his balance had been unsteady, making the activity of riding his motorcycle more of a chore than it used to be. A dedicated member of the Lost Cause, a group



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**Chad Pierson sits on his altered Harley-Davidson during a ceremony held in Hubbard Saturday. Diagnosed with Parkinson's disease, Pierson was given the Good Turn Trike Award. A third wheel was installed on his ride.**

## WHAT IS PARKINSON'S DISEASE?

- Parkinson's disease is the second most common neurodegenerative disorder. It can vary by age at first diagnosis, which signs and symptoms appear first, and in the rate of progression. Parkinson's disease affects the nervous system of the human body. This limits a person's ability to control some of his or her muscles. It's caused by a slow, gradual loss of certain cells in the brain. These cells make a chemical called dopamine. This chemical is needed for muscles to work normally.

- In many people, Parkinson's disease causes movement and muscle problems. This may be a slight, uncontrolled shaking of the arms and legs, called tremors. At times, muscles may feel somewhat stiff and rigid. The person may have difficulty moving his or her arms and legs, or may have shaky hands. Eventually, walking may become a process of taking small steps and slow movement, which is called a shuffling gait.

- Parkinson's disease is believed to be due at least in part to age-related factors. This is because the number of people diagnosed with Parkinson's disease increases as people advance in age. The most common age at the time of diagnosis is about 60 years. Parkinson's disease is not, however, seen exclusively in older people; as many as 10 percent of people with Parkinson's disease show symptoms before age 40. People who develop this disease from age 21 through 40 are said to have "Young Onset Parkinson's Disease."

- According to the Parkinson's Disease Foundation, Parkinson's disease is estimated to affect as many as 1 million Americans. About 50,000 Americans are diagnosed with the disease every year. Boxing champion Muhammad Ali, television and movie star Michael J. Fox, and former Attorney General Janet Reno are all living with Parkinson's disease.

consisting of mainly Hubbard and Eldora bike enthusiasts, Pierson saw his dream of continuing to ride on the open road live on with a big event held in the community Saturday.

Pierson was given a national honor from Lehman Trikes of Spearfish S.D., and Timm's Trikes of St. Charles, Minn. The Hubbard man was nominated by friends for the Good Turn Trike Award. Following his selection, Pierson's Harley-Davidson motorcycle was taken to Timm's Trikes where owner Al Timm rebuilt the machine with an extra wheel.

A large throng of people gathered in downtown Hubbard to see the new look of Pierson's bike. As was expected, Pierson and his wife Kristen were humbled by the kind gesture of all involved with the award.

"It was two years ago in May that I found out that I had Parkinson's. My family and friends had seen me go downhill physically and were worried about me," Pierson said.

Pierson is employed at Van Wall Equipment Service in Ames as a manager. He has worked there for the past 16-17 years. He was stunned and happy with the turnout on Saturday.

"It's pretty humbling to tell you the truth. We knew this might be possible because we had to sign the application papers. Everyone who knows me knows that I love to ride my motorcycle. There is something to be said about the freedom of it where I don't feel confined to anything. We try to ride as much as possible. It's just gotten to the point where if my balance should be off just a little bit... I don't want to hurt myself or someone else on the road," Pierson said.

Speaking on behalf of Timm's Trikes, Al Timm said award criteria is for an individual who is active in his or her community, but has a disability or disease.

"Lehman has people who send in the application to me, and Chad's Harley was taken up to us in Minnesota where we work with it and put the

third wheel on it. We have to take the back end off to get the job done," Timm said.

Also on hand for the bike presentation was Lehman Trikes Sales Manager Clay Strilchuk. He said being around the bike business has taught him one thing — bikers are some of the most gracious people in the world.

"We figure it is good to give something back to people like Chad who do things for others. After talking with him about this award, it was the highlight of our year. We have looked forward to this day," Strilchuk said. "We get some of the most heartfelt responses for this award."

Lehman Trikes Creative Media/Public Relations Director Jaime Kreager said the winners are chosen by an anonymous panel. She said the award given to Pierson is the major highlight for her in that role.

Pierson said his Parkinson's symptoms require him to take 36 pills per day. He said he was willing to be part of a study group at Rochester, Minn., to help find a cure that

has eluded the medical world to date. He said he is thankful that actor Michael J. Fox and boxing legend Muhammad Ali went public with their Parkinson's diagnosis to put the disease out in the public eye.

"I truly believe there is a cure on its way down the road and I just hope it is in my lifetime. That's why I wanted to be a part of the research. We all have our own symptoms and not everyone is the same. I tend to freeze up and my dexterity is affected more so. I do have some leg shakes as well," Pierson said.

Prior to seeing his new bike model, Pierson spoke to all of the friends who have stood by him.

"I am very thankful to Timm's Trikes and Lehman Trikes, my family and friends. You all don't know how much this means to me," Pierson told the crowd.

Everyone in attendance got an idea of just how much the award meant to Pierson, as they watched his face light up the first time he sat down on his new ride. ●



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