

Willy keeps on ridin'

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He would remain in the hospital for about two months. As part of that time, he also began doing physical therapy for a couple weeks in Grand Forks before moving back home to Greenbush in late January. Willy's older sister Kendra Wojciechowski has been taking care of Willy on this journey.

"It was quite a ride. We've just come a long ways from where he started," Kendra said.

To assist Willy on this journey, his uncle and aunt, Keith and Dana Wojciechowski, owners of Wojo's Rodeo and Wojo's Horse Training in rural Greenbush, are hosting the Willy Westman Benefit Rodeo on July 4-6 at Wojo's Arena. To get there, travel three miles east of Greenbush on Highway 11, turn south on 230th Avenue and go one mile.

Hosting a rodeo in Willy's honor was an easy decision, Keith said.

"He's been hanging around here since he was a little kid," Keith said. "I always tell the story that his mom and dad would drop him off by the house there and he'd come with a backpack with his roping and come running out here and spend the day with me. I guess it's no different now."

Now, Willy gets around the Wojciechowski farm by his motorized track chair that he bought and has been riding now for a few weeks. It allows him to not only move five miles an hour on his own, but also stand up-- thanks to a strap-- and do activities at the farm, such as opening the chute doors to release a steer. This chair has been, as Willy described it, "awesome," providing him some independence and making his life better.

"I can get around. I can, if I need something at a rodeo, I can just leave and go get it," Willy said. "I don't need nobody to push me or nothing. It's allowing for hunting and everything, everything that I do, fishing."

Keith explained how he and his family have made sure that Willy can be with them all the time. As far as helping set up at rodeos, before his track chair, they had him driving a golf cart, adding a stick to it to allow him to do so. They've also made some adjustments on the farm to allow him to run the chute and chase cattle.

Willy has received support from many since his accident. This support has meant everything to him, from the many Facebook posts, calls, and texts from his friends within and outside the rodeo circle to his family. His sister Kendra has taken care of him and his sister Lindsey has helped too. This support has given him that fire to get going again.

"My mom and dad are great. Keith and Dana, (cousins) Kally and Tylor (Wojciechowski) they help me with this side of it--the rodeo side--getting me to rodeos, getting me on horses, getting me to be able to help with the rodeo again," Willy said. "And I'm not leaving out the rest of my family too. Everybody's (been) supportive. I appreciate everybody's support."

His father, Brian Westman, also has appreciated this support.

"I want to thank everybody for what they've done for him, cards, gifts. He couldn't do this without the people out there doing it for him, and I just want to thank everybody," Brian said while getting a little choked up. "... It's been hard and tough."

Every day, Willy said he is getting better. He continues to do physical therapy, working on his balance and even doing some roping. He's also doing pull-ups, lifting weights, and riding a bicycle machine, strapping his legs into it and moving it with his hands.

During this whole process, his sister Kendra has witnessed a progression in Willy.

"His confidence level is so much higher now. He's getting more independent and he's just doing a great job," Kendra said. "He looks forward to coming out here (to the Wojciechowski farm) everyday. He's excited for rodeo season. He's happy again."

As his father said, rodeo is Willy's life and it has continued

to provide him with his greatest joy.

"Coming here makes me happy. It's like I'm back at the ranch (Wojciechowski farm), you know," Willy said.

While at the hospital, he went through a rough time, but he told himself that he needed to get up and stop doing what he was going. The rodeo life and the Wojciechowski farm provided him one outlet to get out of this rut.

"I always had a smile on my face before this accident, so I was like, 'I need to get that back,' and I said, 'I need to start hanging out with my uncle (Keith) again and I need to start riding horse,'" Willy said. "So that kind of motivated me... Springtime rodeos are going to start. I need to start doing this stuff. And I mean, yeah, I've only been out of the hospital for five months, or whatever it is, but hey shoot, I couldn't ask for it to go any better than it is (going) right now."

Before his accident, Willy went to many rodeos. If his aunt and uncle weren't hosting a rodeo, he and his cousin Tylor went to one. He also competed in various events at rodeos, including: bull riding, bull fighting, saddle bronc riding, steer wrestling, and a little team roping.

"I was doing all that and was going all over the place 'rodeoing' and I loved it," Willy said.

Now, following the accident, he continues to stay involved in the rodeos. He has assisted a friend named "Fred," who judges at rodeos.

"He (Fred) doesn't have good use of his hands," Willy said. "So I'll sit by him and he'll score the horse or bull or whatever he's scoring and then I'll radio back and write it down for him."

Although he hasn't opened any chutes at any rodeos, he did buy his own bucking bull named "Uno." He doesn't plan to stop there.

"My plan is, in the future, is to get riding horse, buy my own ranch, have horses, have some bucking bulls, and rodeo," Willy said.

Asked what it means to see Willy still involved in the rodeo aspect of his life, Kendra said, "It means a lot. It really makes me happy and warms my heart. I'm just completely thrilled that we've gotten to this point."

After getting out of his rut, Willy said that he is doing better mentally and physically. Physical therapy has also helped in this process.

"It's going way better," Willy said. "As long as I keep my head up, which I will, I'll be doing fine."

His father Brian has also witnessed improvements in him since the accident.

"Myself, I believe he'll walk again and ride again, but time will tell," Brian said.

As for the rodeo benefit, when Willy heard about it being held in his honor, he felt many positive feelings about it.

"My auntie (Dana) and uncle (Keith) go out of their way for me and so does Kally and Tylor, and my whole family, they go out of their way," Willy said. "But for them putting this rodeo on for me, it just means so much because it's going to draw a lot of attention to my friends and family."

He hopes these friends and family come to the rodeo to have a good time.

"I'm not even in it for the money. I don't care," Willy said. "I want people to come to have fun, come see me, and that's it. I mean, I just want everybody to come and enjoy some rodeo action."

Despite the accident, Willy has kept on riding that horse known as life. He plans to keep on riding it in the arenas he has come to love-- rodeos. This accident hasn't stopped him.

"Willy's still the same guy. He just can't walk. That's about it," Willy said. "And I'll be fine with that as long as, I didn't die so I mean that's the big thing. So I'll be happy (with) whatever God wants me to do, you know, I mean whatever. The cards are dealt and I'll play them."

**INDEPENDENT SCHOOL DISTRICT 2683
GREENBUSH/MIDDLE RIVERS SCHOOL
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1. Notice is hereby given that Independent School District No. 2683, Greenbush/Middle River, will receive quotes for bread, milk and related products required by the district for the period from July 1, 2019 to June 30, 2020, according to the specifications and conditions which may be obtained from the office of the Superintendent of Schools, Greenbush/Middle River School District No. 2683, PO Box 70, Greenbush, MN 56726.

Quotes shall be submitted in form and manner obtained in the specifications and the conditions, which are adopted by reference, in this invitation for quotes.

2. On July 15, 2019 at 7:30p.m., the School Board will meet to evaluate the quotes and act thereon. The School District reserves the right to accept, reject or waive any infonnality of any quote and to make an award for bread, milk and related products which is deemed most favorable and advantageous to the school district. If further information is desired, interested persons should contact Superintendent Mr. Jerome at 218-782-2231 ext 205.

Dated this 18th day of June, 2019 .

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Greenbush/Middle River Schools
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(June 26 & July, 3, 2019)

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