

# Motorcycle ride to benefit Barton, Joslin camps

## 'UNTIL THERE'S A CURE, THERE'S A CAMP'

BY AMANDA COLLINS  
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CHARLTON — It was April 2008 when life as they knew it changed for Joe and Christine Hamm.

After noticing their son, Jay, had been putting on weight, was moody and had an unquenchable thirst, they brought him to a specialist who diagnosed the then 11-year-old with type 1 diabetes.

"It was devastating," said Hamm. "We didn't know a lot about it. We thought it was something that affected older people, or people with terrible diets. We didn't expect that at all."

Unlike type 2 diabetes, which is often linked to a poor diet or obesity, type 1 diabetes occurs when the pancreas stops producing insulin, a hormone that enables the body to use glucose, or sugar, for energy. Instead the glucose backs up in the bloodstream. There is no cure for type 1 diabetes, which is treatable only with insulin, which must be delivered through multiple daily injections or with an insulin pump.

The Hamm family, originally from Massachusetts, was living in Florida at the time of Jay's diagnosis. They packed up and moved back north to Leicester, where they could be closer to the Joslin Diabetes Center in Boston, a teaching and research affiliate of Harvard Medical School.

Besides what Hamm called "top-notch" care at the Joslin Diabetes Center, the family found even more support for Jay upon moving back to the area, when they were referred to Camp Joslin, a summer camp for boys with type 1 diabetes on Richardson Corner Road in

Charlton.

"We had no idea this world-renowned camp was right in our backyard. For Jay, it was meant to be," said Hamm, who explained that after his son came back from his first summer at Camp Joslin four years ago, he couldn't say enough about the connections he had made with other kids who dealt with the same medical issues he did.

Once an outshoot of the Joslin Diabetes Center, the camp is now run by the Barton Center, a non-profit that promotes juvenile diabetes education. The Barton Center runs another summer camp for girls, the Clara Barton Camp, in North Oxford.

The camps are in many ways like any other traditional summer camp — featuring activities like swimming, cookouts and kayaking. But they also focus on diabetes education and management. For the kids who attend, this makes it an especially meaningful experience.

"Jay's doctor spent three weeks at the camp this summer. They were out playing tennis together. Because of the camp, when he goes to see his doctor it's like going to see a buddy," said Hamm.

Jay, who is now 15 and junior at Leicester High School, was a junior counselor this summer and is hoping to be employed by the camp next year.

"I can't say enough about how much this camp has meant in my son's life," Hamm said.

But the experience isn't cheap, with the cost to attend a two-week camp session running upwards of \$2,500. Camp Joslin staffer Brenden Duffy said at least 50 percent of campers make



Courtesy photo

Last year, motorcyclists enjoyed the scenic ride from West Boylston to Camp Joslin in Charlton.

use of financial aid like the campership fund.

Seeing both the financial strain and the social benefits of the camp firsthand, Hamm decided to create a fundraising motorcycle ride to benefit the campership fund.

This year will mark the fourth annual Ride for Barton, an event that seems to double every year. On Sunday, Sept. 16, hundreds of motorcyclists will take off on a 70-mile scenic ride, to end up at Camp Joslin for live music by the Otters, food, raffles and a car meet.

The police-escorted ride will leave from The Central Mass. Safety Council at 186 West Boylston Street, in West Boylston, at 10 a.m. Registration will take place there from 8:45 to 9:45 a.m.

The cost for the ride is \$25 per rider, which includes a meal and a T-shirt to the first 100 riders. Passengers pay just \$10.

The classic car meet will start at 11:30 a.m. at Camp Joslin. Any make and models are welcome to participate for a \$10 donation. The general public can also enjoy the festivities at the camp for a \$10 donation.

The ride is sponsored by Barnstorm Cycles, McKenna Insurance, the Steel Horse Sisters, the Leicester Police Association and AgaMatrix. For more details on the ride and to become a sponsor or to donate, visit [rideforbarton.org](http://rideforbarton.org) or call Hamm at (508) 892-5332.

"The more people who come, the more kids get to go to camp," Hamm said. "Until there's a cure, there's a camp."

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