

# Beard Bash to help Kids On The Move

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Barbara Christiansen DAILY HERALD

**OREM** -- The jolly old elf himself has one of the most iconic beards, so it is appropriate to celebrate beards with Santa. And it's for a good cause.

Saturday there will be a "beard bash" as a fund raiser to help Kids On The Move, a program to help families address a child's developmental challenges.

Orem resident Tyler Riser has autism, which affected his communication and development. His parents found out about Kids on the Move and took him there, which helped. He struggled but slowly began coming out of his shell.

Now nearing his 20<sup>th</sup> birthday, Tyler expressed to his parents a wish to give back to Kids On The Move. He had grown a beard from time to time and had started one for No-shave November. The family decided to make that the theme for the event.

Beard Bash runs from 11 a.m. to 1 p.m. on Dec. 6 at Timpanogos Harley-Davidson, at Geneva Road and 1600 North in Orem.

It includes beard and mustache contests, a photo booth and visits with Santa and his legendary beard, a temporary beard and tattoo parlor, games, giveaways and a disc jockey.

A \$20 donation provides lunch and a custom Harley-Davidson beard bash T-shirt. There are also \$25 tickets available for a chance to win a 2014 Harley-Davidson motorcycle. It is an XL883L Sportster SuperLow model. There is no limit to the number of tickets an individual can purchase and the money goes directly to Kids On The Move. The drawing takes place after the event and the winner does not need to be present.

The funds raised at Beard Bash will directed to the Autism Bridges program which provides critical, early intervention therapy to young autistic children.

There is a goal of \$20,000 for Beard Bash to raise. That would provide a full month of therapy for 20 children for a month.

"Therapy can make the difference between a nonverbal adult living on state assistance, to a verbal functioning adult who has a job and pays taxes," according to the Utah Autism Coalition. That group has said Utah has the second highest rate of autism in the country with one in 54 children diagnosed on the autism spectrum.

When Tyler was born, his family lived in a duplex across the street from Orem Community Hospital. Kids On The Move was nearby, but the family was not aware of it.

"When he was about five months, my wife finally got him to sit up," Tai Riser, his dad, said.

During the next months, they went to numerous medical professionals who didn't offer the help they felt they needed.

"Finally at 15 months he was not crawling, not making sounds," Tai Riser said. "We went to Primary

Children's Hospital and they did all this work. We sat down with a neurologist who told us that physiologically nothing was wrong."

When Tyler was 18 months, they discovered Kids On The Move, and things changed.

"Within weeks they got him crawling," Tai Riser said. "It was the same thing with walking."

Kids On The Move not only helped Tyler; it helped the family learn how to help him, Tai Riser said.

"They have always held a real special place in our hearts," he said.

Tyler aged out of Kids On The Move when he was 3, but the group helped the family find new resources to help. He continues to make slow progress.

"Tyler was not very verbal at all until he started high school at Timpanogos," he said. "Now he gets really excited about things and he loves to give high fives."

Another thing he loves is to celebrate his birthday, Tai Riser said.

"It kind of snowballed," he said. "We are in a place where we could give back. Wouldn't it be nice to raise money for Kids On The Move and help build awareness they are a resource for parents."

"We started brainstorming and played off of No-shave November, doing the beard thing," he said.

And Beard Bash was born.

Helen Stoddard has been helping plan the event.

"For me I think it is amazingly important," she said. "Tyler was diagnosed with autism when he was young. His parents were first-time parents. They found this amazing group Kids On The Move and they were able to step in and help."

"Tyler is such a great kid and has such a big heart," she said. "He started growing a beard and got so much attention for it, it became a rallying point and a way to give back. He wanted to have a party for everybody."

"Tyler doesn't fully understand the world but he wants other people to be happy and successful like him," she said.

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