

Noble Heights

Several years ago I was sitting at the top of an active volcano in Guatemala enjoying the breathtaking view of a sprawling rainforest like I had never seen before. I was in a state of awe and euphoria gazing over the beautiful landscape sure that I was the luckiest man in the world. When suddenly, and to this day I am not sure why, it dawned on me that kids who use wheelchairs could never make it to where I was sitting. The hike was rather difficult, steep and full of loose rock that I struggled to find footing in. The thought of rolling a chair up the trail was incomprehensible and meant they couldn't experience what I was at that moment. I wanted to do something about this. So I vowed to someday take kids who use wheelchairs to that exact spot. I did not know how, I just knew that I wanted to do it. They were going to experience this view and many others around the world.



Initially my idea was to strap kids to my brother's backs and carry them on these adventure hikes. For those of you that don't know my brothers are relatively big guys and have always been great about jumping on board with my crazy ideas. But after months of research and enough people telling me I was nuts I had to

accept that the idea of strapping children to my brothers and hiking to the tops of volcanoes was not safe. I now I had a vision of my brother Tyler rolling down the side of a mountain with a kid strapped to his back and it wasn't pretty.

Not ready to give up and trusting there had to be a way I continued my research. Finally using a forum in the UK I was referred to a company in Canada that produces a chair called the Trail Rider. The Trail Rider is a unique looking chair that some say is half wheelbarrow and half rickshaw. In any case they had taken someone near the top of Mt. Kilimanjaro in this chair and I knew my search was over. I had found the chair that was going to accompany me around the world to the most amazing places taking people to heights they never thought possible.

In the excitement of this wonderful news I called my brother Scott and told him we are ready to head south! Once again, I was logistically grounded: "Nick, don't you think it would be a good idea to start local and small before you plan trips half way around the world with a chair you have never used?" Ugh, of course he was right. I was not ready to head south.

In the midst of all of this I met a kid named Austin Taylor who has used a wheelchair since birth. Amazingly he shared a similar vision and openly offered himself to be our 'guinea pig' if we ever made these hikes a reality. He is a brave and wonderful man and of course I took him up on his offer. We became instant friends.

So we started thinking local and small and needed a guide to ensure we did not end up on the evening news as missing persons. Enter Nancy Wood. Nancy and her husband Jim are avid hikers and were willing to help us out.



Yes! And at that moment, even though we did not realize it, another element was added to our dream. Nancy took me to breakfast one morning and shared that she was a former foster youth. She knew that Generation Fate worked with foster children and made it very clear that the only way she would organize these hikes is if we included foster youth. As a child she was involved in hiking and camping and remembers it being one of the few times she was able to be a kid. And if these hikes were going to happen under her watch foster kids were going to be there too. "Ok" I thought to myself "why didn't I think of that? Let's make it happen" Foster youth, Austin, volunteers, social workers, Jim and Nancy... sounds like a great time.

With a few more phone calls, breakfast meetings and a little more logistical grounding we were finally ready to set the date for our first hike – April 5th 2008, Bothe Napa Valley State Park.



What started with a vision of practically duct taping kids to my brothers and running up mountains in third world countries turned into a local hike with Austin, 30 foster youth, social workers, volunteers, friends and family; 61 people in total. And I am so very proud to say that we completed and survived our first adventure. No we were not on the other side of the world, we were not traversing sheer cliffs and we definitely were not near any active volcanoes. But that did not matter. Together, with the most eclectic group I had ever been a part of, we hiked for five miles

through the great coastal redwoods of Napa Valley.

Across creeks, over logs and through meadows filled with spring flowers we all left our lives behind for a few hours. Foster children were not foster children and Austin could hike with the best of us. For a moment we were all the same...

Its hard for me to connect the dots and fathom how things turned out the way they did. But it's clear to me that none of this would have been possible without all of the amazing people in my life. The names would be too long to list and I hope you know who you are. If I have not thanked you enough please stop by the office and give a good knock on my head.

In the end I can tell you that this hike is the first of many and I can promise you that Austin and I will never give up on our dream of exploring the world. Austin's eyes will one day pear into that valley in Guatemala and he will see what I saw.

Now what to say? I am not sure how to end this as I am no story writer. With a loss of words I guess I can be cliché and just quote Green Day.



*It's something unpredictable
but in the end it's right.
I hope you had the time of your life.*

I know I did...

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General Updates

Bay to Breakers – Our second annual Bay to Breakers Event will be coming up soon! Come join us in this fun, wild and memorable event. To join our crazy run club please email runclub@generationfate.org.

Good Search – Google is out, Good Search is in. When you need to conduct an online search try GoodSearch.com. Just type our name in – Generation Fate – as your charity

and search away! Penny's add up! (We will keep reminding all of you until you jump on the band wagon)

Summer Camp Mentors Needed – We are preparing for our first annual summer camp and leadership program and we need volunteers. Mentor a foster child through a wonderful experience and impact their lives forever. Anyone interested please contact Jason File at jason@generationfate.org.

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Projects

Events

The primary goal of Generation Fate is to instill vital self-confidence in our foster youth. By providing these children with consistent positive relationships, access to enrichment programs, supplemental education, and the support of a loving community, we will become an agent of change in the lives of America's foster children.

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