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Mark Reynolds Foundation gives children a ticket to ride

40 needy kids in area get their own bicycles

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JESSICA STEWART/St. Joseph News-Press Samantha Price, 6, Savannah, Mo., gets help with her new bike helmet from Savannah volunteer fire fighter Harold Morgan on Saturday afternoon. The Mark Reynolds Children's First Bicycle Fund gave away 40 bikes on Saturday in St. Joseph, Savannah and Albany, Mo.

children in the area, and across the nation.

Samuel Howell's legs weren't quite long enough to reach the pedals of his brand new bicycle. But that didn't stop the 5-year-old as he quickly learned that by swaying side to side, he could still take his new bike for a spin.

A smile grew on the child's face and he rode in circles faster and faster.

"There you go, there you go, good job, buddy!" Samuel's father, Joseph, said as Samuel got up to speed and joined the other children who were already zipping around on their first bikes at the Andrew County Fire Department headquarters in Savannah on Saturday.

Thanks to the Mark Reynolds Foundation, Samuel was just one of about 40 area children who received their first bikes Saturday. Dona Reynolds, the foundation's executive director, has carried on her son Mark's desire to see those smiles that come from a child's first bike.

"It's amazing what a bike can do for a child," Ms. Reynolds said, donning her own smile.

When bicycle enthusiast and St. Joseph native Mark Reynolds was killed in California in 2004, Ms. Reynolds and other family members wanted to continue one of his passions — providing bicycles to children. Before his death, Mr. Reynolds donated bicycles every year anonymously to children who otherwise might not ever get to the chance to own their own bikes. Now, the foundation provides the bikes to underprivileged or disabled

One of the stops Saturday was in Savannah where about a dozen kids' names were called, one by one, to receive a new bike. Young faces quickly blossomed in joy as they discovered that the shiny bikes were theirs.

Samantha Price, 7, couldn't contain her excitement as she simply repeated "cool!" and "awesome!" while already seeing how fast the bike could go. Her mother, Layce, wiped tears away while watching Samantha's unwavering, open-mouth smile.

"Do you have water in your eyes?" Samantha asked as she took a quick break from riding in circles. Ms. Price simply nodded and tried to hold in a laugh as she bent down to adjust Samantha's helmet.

For more information on the foundation, or to make a donation, visit www.markreynoldsfund.org.

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