

My Pub Page Has Gone to the Dogs (...And That's Totally Fine with Me)

Every now and then I get a brainstorm so big, I feel like I could bench-press double my weight and then some. I am an idea person. I love coming up with new twists on old favorites. Many readers of *PhillyFIT* have told me that my pub page is, well, an old favorite, and as such, I thought it was high time to put a fresh spin on these popular pages. With the arrival of the new year and the high of the holidays, I thought I'd sort of "donate" this pub page to my new pal, Jason Burgess. After ten years of writing *PhillyFIT*'s Pub page, I thought it might be time to "go quiet" and trumpet someone else's soulful mission.

Local do-gooder Jason is on a personal mission to raise funds for RedRover, an amazing California-based nonprofit organization, as he is participating in the Race Across America (RAAM) cycling competition. Jason selected RedRover because he is well aware of the critical role that this little-known nonprofit plays in the lives of pet owners in crisis. Simply put, as publisher, I selected Jason because he selected animals.

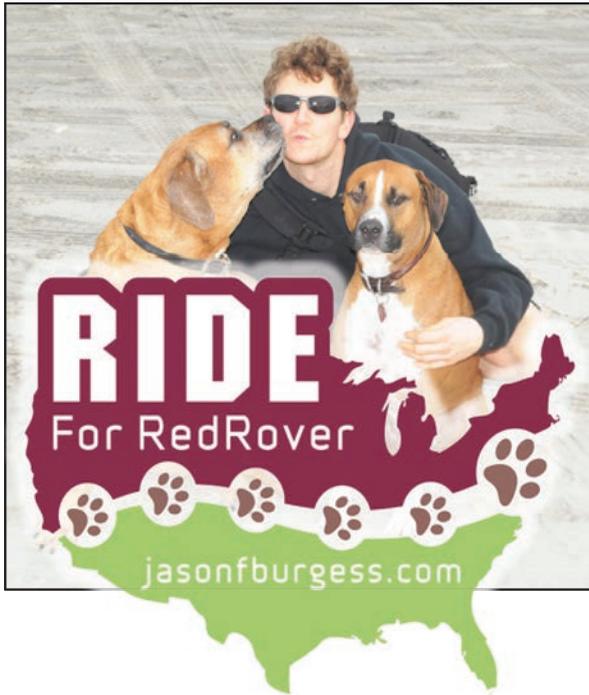
You see, back in April 2007, a devastating fire burned Jason's house to the ground. His dogs, Claire, Twizzy, and Duke were trapped inside. Sadly, his beloved boxer, Duke, didn't make it out. Claire and Twizzy suffered from major heat and smoke inhalation as a result of this traumatic event. Both were rescued by local firefighters who administered oxygen and transported them to a nearby vet hospital. Claire's injuries were the most serious. She spent several weeks in intensive care at the Matthew J. Ryan Veterinary Hospital at the University of Pennsylvania. Thankfully, both Claire and Twizzy survived the fire and their initial, health-related setbacks. During this difficult time, one of the organizations that helped Jason's family was United Animal Nations, now known as RedRover. This amazing group provides financial and emotional support through various programs for animals and their caregivers during times of crisis. Wow! Love this!

Now Jason is preparing to give back. Jason, 38, works in law enforcement and lives in Blue Bell with his wife and two children. A native of New Jersey, he has been active in athletics throughout his life and has competed as a nationally ranked swimmer, played ice hockey, and acted as captain for several teams. He has also participated in a variety of endurance races, including several Tough Mudders, Goals Adventure Races, and triathlons. RAAM is an amazing coast-to-coast bike race from Oceanside, California, to Annapolis, Maryland. RAAM attracts elite cyclists from all over the world. Jason will compete as a solo rider, traversing 3,000+ miles and twelve states in just twelve days. Fewer than 300 riders have completed the solo race in its 30-year history.

Much like me, Jason is a strong advocate for animals and the environment. He has dedicated his law-enforcement career to making the environment a safer place for people and animals alike. Jason has been participating in endurance races since 2012, and completed the RAAM qualifier in August 2014, cycling 400 miles in under 24 hours.

As part of his training for RAAM, Jason will bike 8,000 miles in the next ten months. Jason notes, "My family is my motivation. Claire was my best friend and her will to live has been an inspiration to me. I can't think of a better way to honor her than to raise awareness for RedRover's mission and how it helped my family."





To track Jason's exciting adventure, follow "Ride for RedRover" online: facebook.com/pages/Ride-for-RedRover/691902254197528; twitter.com/Ride4RedRover

Show your support for Jason and Claire by joining their fundraiser for RedRover: razoo.com/story/Ride-For-Red-Rover
 Visit jasonfburgess.com for more information on his personal Ride for RedRover.

To learn more about this amazing organization, log on to RedRover.org.

Okay, I know what you're thinking, "I just don't have the endurance to ride my bike across this country, but I want to do good too!" Yes, I get it. When I learned of Jason's inspirational pay-it-forward mission, I too wanted to use my mind, body and soul in an altruistic sense. Here's where I netted out: You don't need to race, walk or even hop anywhere to spread good will. Just do what you can. If your New Year's resolution involves some sort of generous or selfless act, then all you have to do is follow through on whatever that is! Simply ask yourself who has helped you in your time of need and then vow to reciprocate in whatever way you can. There are so many nonprofit local and regional organizations that could benefit from acts big or small. If animals are your thing, just email me. I can send you a list of shelters that have been rescuing animals for a long time. No matter what your passion is, I know for certain that there is an organization just wanting to hear from you. It's a new year, and this year I'm vowing to focus on others. If you have ideas, suggestions or know of someone who would benefit from exposure on a future pub page, please email me and let me know. To me, every day should be #GivingTuesday!

Happy, healthy New Year!

TAMI*



Jason's 7 Simple Steps for a Healthier 2015

1. Enroll in an organized event:

There are many local opportunities where you can join other people in a competition or a physical activity. Having a goal — a 1-mile walk for charity or a 100-mile bike ride to the shore — makes it easier to stay focused and dedicate real time towards training. When I am not working towards an event, it is easy to let my other personal and professional commitments sabotage my exercise routine.



2. Find people who share your fitness interest:

Joining together with other people who share your passion will certainly make you push yourself harder and motivate you to "get out there" at times when you'd much rather bag it. You can easily research options for just about any activity (locally) at meetup.com. Or you can start a meetup. It's easy.

3. Get professional help:

Physical therapists, massage therapists, physicians, and coaches play critical roles in maintaining your fitness level. They are also a great resource for networking as they are often plugged into other fitness experts and enthusiasts who can expand your horizons. Always consult with your primary-care physician prior to starting a new physical regimen. He/she can offer suggestions that might have been overlooked.

4. Focus on nutrition:

Providing your body with the right fuel is critical to maintaining the energy level you need to exercise. Protein and lots of water are key. This is nothing new but often forgotten.

5. Don't let your current fitness status dissuade you from setting a goal:

You are better than you think you are. You can do more than you think you can. Remember that "Little Engine That Could?" If you are a few pounds overweight, believe me, you'll shed those in no time with all the training hours you put in.

6. Opt for a short memory when it comes to your "failures.":

Each new day is an opportunity to improve. If you missed a goal, focus on the next day instead of the goal you missed. If you achieve every goal, you are probably not setting your sights high enough. Don't get discouraged and don't listen to naysayers. 90% of your efforts could be earmarked toward mental strength and positivity.

7. Be open to trying new things and invite others to join you.

I have competed in swimming, ice hockey, cross-country running, tae kwon do, aikido, triathlons, cycling, mud runs, soccer, and paintball to name a few. Many of these started because a friend asked me to join. Try new things and bring the people you care about along with you. Don't stay stagnant in your comfort zone.