



Donor Profile: Kathy Schubert

BY APRIL CYPHER



“EVERYONE WHO RIDES A BIKE SHOULD WEAR A HELMET. DOGS INCLUDED.”

Chicago cyclist has dog, will travel

→ It didn't take Kathy Schubert long to go from learning to ride a bike to riding a loaded bike. As a young girl in Chicago's Albany Park neighborhood, Kathy started traveling back and forth from the library, her bike basket piled with books, as soon as the training wheels came off. The thrill of loading up her bike hasn't worn over time. She has navigated the Windy City with a 30-pound electric water heater, pulled a rented carpet shampooing machine, and regularly packs her panniers for multiday tours. But her favorite cargo is her 18-pound Miniature Schnauzer, Suzy.

Before signing Suzy's adoption papers at the shelter, there was one thing Kathy needed to know. She set Suzy in the bike basket and watched. "If she didn't like it, I knew it wouldn't work out." Now, Suzy is Kathy's most consistent cycling partner. After 16 RAGBRAI rides — 10 with her previous Mini Schnauzer Joey, and six with Suzy — Kathy has made a name for herself as the lady with the dog.

Traveling by bike with a dog poses challenges, like finding dog-friendly lodging, but Kathy finds the benefits of taking Suzy far outweigh any difficulty. When last year's RAGBRAI route was announced, Kathy called veterinarians in small Iowa towns to inquire about who might host the pair for a night. She quickly found places to stay with some vets offering their own homes.

Over the years, Kathy has gathered enough anecdotes about riding RAGBRAI with Joey and Suzy that she's turned it into a stand-up comedy routine.

What sets Kathy and Suzy apart from most other people riding with their dogs are the costumes and matching helmets.

"Everyone who rides a bike should wear a helmet," said Kathy. "Dogs included." Three companies manufacture dog helmets, but by making them herself Kathy finds she can get the perfect fit and customize them to match her themed helmets. Their current count for matching sets? Fourteen.

At home, Kathy is best known throughout Chicago's cycling community for her advocacy work, garnering awards from both the city's Department of Transportation and Critical Mass Chicago. After she fell while riding her bike on a notoriously dangerous grated bridge in 2002, she started a petition by handing out postcards that urged the city to make the bridge more bike-friendly. Kathy knows she can't claim all the credit for metal plates that were later installed to make it safer for cyclists, but she has more than one friend who refers to the plates as "Kathy plates."

Though much of her work is focused on making Chicago a better place to ride, her dedication to the

cycling community extends far beyond the Midwest. A longtime supporter and member of Adventure Cycling Association, Kathy became a Life Member in 2001. More recently, she helped fund a large-format book celebrating the 40th anniversary of the

TransAmerica Bicycle Trail created by Adventure Cycling Co-Founder Greg Siple and editor Mac McCoy.

If you're one of the 8,500-plus riders cycling across Iowa during 2016 RAGBRAI, keep an eye out for Kathy and Suzy. With their matching jerseys,

the iconic duo shouldn't be hard to spot. As Kathy said of Suzy, "she is the RAGBRAI dog." 

April Cypher is Adventure Cycling's Development Coordinator. She was disappointed to learn there is no known recording of Kathy's comedy routine.



Riding the final miles of the TransAmerica Bicycle Trail in Virginia in 1976.

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Thanks to the following sponsors of the upcoming book chronicling the history of the TransAmerica Bicycle Trail, who jumped at the chance to help bring the vibrant story of the TransAm Trail to life through their generous support.

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