

# BallouSkies

## A triathlon team finds inspiration in the fight against Muscular Dystrophy

Ty Ballou had competed in other triathlon before 2008, when he traveled from his home in Pittsburgh to the Miami International Triathlon in Florida. But this was the first one that he would use to raise money for BallouSkies, the nonprofit he created to raise money to fight Muscular Dystrophy. He grabbed an old T-shirt with the BallouSkies logo and completed the Olympic-distance race in the middle of the pack. He received his finisher's medal and, at the end of the day, had raised about \$250 donated by friends.

Not bad. But it was just the start of a new triathlon team that's now finding success both in racing and raising money for a rare form of Muscular Dystrophy.

Ty's son Ryan, now 24, has been battling Duchenne Muscular Dystrophy (DMD) since birth. The degenerative muscle disorder, which affects all the muscles in the body, is one of 40 different variations of MD that only targets boys. Ryan, who now attends college, always has been an advocate against the disease.

"It is sometimes a challenge, but my family and I always pull together and deal with whatever test is put in front of us from this disorder," Ryan says. "I have given numerous speeches to parents of afflicted boys, and I hope to spread awareness to these parents and let them know that there is hope. Nevertheless, my family and I believe that we could do something more to aid this cause."

That's why Ty founded BallouSkies, to raise awareness for research and gain funds to aid the heart clinic at Ohio State University (OSU) where Ryan has received treatment. It's at OSU that Dr. Stephen Cook and his teams of doctors are using MRI technology to scan the heart.

These MRI scans show a patient's heart from every angle, and every aspect of the heart can be scrutinized. At Ohio State's clinic, they are testing boys of different ages with this technique to check for scarring and other heart problems and then track these problems with future MRIs. This allows boys and their families to know if there is a complication before it becomes untreatable. This research can help DMD patients as well as anybody with heart problems.

Since that first triathlon, Ty has recruited other athletes to the cause and created the BallouSkies Triathlon Team. With more than a dozen athletes competing, the team raised more than \$27,000 in 2010 and aims to bring in more than \$50,000 this year. Along with the fund raising success, the team also has excelled on the racecourse, with six team members qualifying to race at Kona this year.

"This has happened because of one thing—people either learning about or meeting Ryan, my family and individuals who are willing to help fight to keep hearts healthy," Ty says. "It is about sponsors like, Wheaties Fuel, Powerade Zero and BlueSeventy Swim Wear that are learning about the tremendous work being done on the campus of Ohio State University by the dedicated doctors and staff who are extending the lives of those with Duchenne Muscular Dystrophy."

To read more about the charity and its accomplishments, go to [www.ballouskies.com](http://www.ballouskies.com). If you like what you see, join us on the cause page on Facebook. Invite 10, 20, 50 people on your friend list to join. Tell people about this 24-year-old man who walks taller than anyone on the BallouSkies race team because of his inspiration. Donate if you like. Say a prayer for all children with life-threatening diseases.

And run around in a T-shirt for any cause. You never know what will happen!

