

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Contact: Jean Overstreet
Phone: (919) 657-0580
Email: jean@i2icenter.org
www.i2icenter.org

Ainsley's Angels of Eastern North Carolina Wins 2019 Innovation Award for Individual and Family Initiatives

Pinehurst, NC (December 5, 2019). Ainsley Rossiter was born with a rare disorder that severely limited her development and her life expectancy. As she grew, Ainsley began to use a feeding tube to eat, a wheelchair to ambulate, and she was unable to attend school. Wanting to make Ainsley's life as memorable as possible, her family began to participate in road races in which a disabled child, or an "Angel Rider" is pushed over the land in a special stroller by an able bodied "Angel Runner". "i2i is very excited to recognize such an inspiring program that enriches the lives of individuals with disabilities and their families taking a true whole person approach to life and care with the 2019 Innovation Award for Individual and Family Initiatives" said Mary Hooper, i2i Executive Director.

As Ainsley and her family began to participate in more and more road races, it became very obvious that Ainsley loved to feel the wind in her hair and the joy of rolling in races. After seeing the joy that riding in races provided to Ainsley, her aunt began to spread the word in Louisiana where Ainsley's Angels officially launched. Ainsley's aunt and her former preschool teacher joined the Rossiter family in creating inclusive running groups across the country, which they call Ambassadorships. Today, Ainsley's Angels (AA) has Ambassadorships across the United States and partners with many local events and also the Marine Corps Marathon.

Ainsley's Angels advocates for complete inclusion across all domains of an individual's life, not just where it has been experienced or expected previously. They empower individuals to participate in activities that are typically thought of as catering to "able bodied" individuals by providing each Angel rider with an able bodied Angel runner and celebrating the rider's participation. Each time an Angel runner stands behind their Angel rider, shoulder to shoulder

with the able bodied runners, the other race participants feel the excitement and energy from the AA team-it's contagious! As each Angel rider is pulled across the finish line by their Angel runner, the community cheers for the team, and inclusion and acceptance are on full display for all to witness and partake! Ainsley's Angels strives to ensure that each Angel rider is as comfortable as possible when they take their place in their race chairs. Each rider is able to customize their positioning as needed. In a broader sense, Ainsley's Angels has been able to make the world of road races more accessible by pairing a disabled rider with an able bodied runner, thus allowing the sport to be accessible to far more participants.

Ainsley's Angels Mission Statement

In addition to ensuring everyone can experience endurance events, Ainsley's Angels of America aims to build awareness about America's special needs community through inclusion in all aspects of life, by promoting awareness, providing education, and participating as active members in local communities.

About i2i Center for Integrative Health

The mission of the i2i Center is to foster collaborative and evidence-based initiatives for improving the quality and efficacy of the behavioral health, intellectual and developmental disabilities, and substance use care and support services systems within a comprehensive system of whole person care. The i2i Center accomplishes its mission by convening stakeholders, strategizing solutions, and activating change.