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Rite-Way earns national recognition

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Owners of a local automotive repair shop took the top spot and received national recognition for their philanthropic ways, this time in support of veterans.

Last Spring, Rite-Way Auto joined an effort with its distributor, Tire Pros, and the Independence Fund, to provide 100 motorized wheelchairs for 100 veterans. The "Allies for Independence" partnership has set out to supply customized all-terrain chairs to wounded American veterans to give disabled vets the chance to get around better, particularly outdoors. This national campaign intends to raise \$1.5 million over the next two years to reach their goal.

There are over 740 Tire Pros dealers nationwide, and out of all of them Rite-Way Auto had the honor of raising the most money during the starting phase of the program, running from April to November last year.

"We raised over \$8,000," said Rite-Way owner and Navy

veteran Jim Dusek.

To raise that money, Dusek not only collected donations in his business, but held several fundraising events throughout those months in conjunction with other city-wide events, such as Waterfest and the BBQ Fly-In on the River. Dusek plans to continue those efforts in the coming year.

"The chairs cost between \$14,000-\$16,000 each, so we technically paid for half a chair," said Dusek. "Just think of how many more we could get if every store in the country could raise that much? We're definitely going to keep going."

Those chairs come at such a high cost because they are customized specifically for the veteran's injuries. A testimonial on the Allies of Independence website states, "I received my Tracfab chair last summer. It has allowed me to get out of the house and do things as simple as playing in the yard with my three daughters to even supporting my wife and daughters during a six mile ruck march last



Jim Dusek, owner of Rite-Way Auto, stands next to the Polaris ATV he was gifted from Tire Pros. Out of 740 Tire Pros dealers nationwide, Rite-Way was able to raise the most money last year for their "Allies for Independence" veterans fundraiser. (Photo by Skyla Sullivan)

fall. It has removed 'excuses' as to why 'I can't' and reminded me how 'I CAN.' For that I am so thankful."

For Rite-Way's success, the Duseks were presented with a Polaris ATV at the Tire Pros Annual Convention held in New Orleans this past February. It was delivered to the store just weeks ago, and can be seen in the main lobby. Dusek

plans to brand it with the signature Rite-Way logo and colors and utilize it during the many town events he, his staff and his family volunteer for throughout the year.

Last year, with the Independence Fund of Kansas City, Rite-Way was able to bring veterans currently using the motorized chairs to the Waterfest Parade. Later, at the BBQ on the River

Festival, they had two booths available - one for the public and one for veterans interested in obtaining more information about the program.

"It's just a really great program and we're happy to be a part of it and get the community involved," Dusek said. "There's rarely a time when someone hears about it that they don't reach in their

pocket and grab their wallet to donate."

Other opportunities at both events will be coming up this summer for anyone interested in learning more or donating, as well as possible upcoming partnerships with the Kansas City Chiefs.

In the meantime, those interested in donating can also do so at excelsiorsprings.alliesforindy.org/di-give.