

Join Harry in the race

If you're disabled, it's not always possible to compete in mainstream events. Sophie Bond finds out about sporting opportunities that really are open to all.

ARRY Randall picks up speed and races ahead of his sisters, Beth and Rosie. His hand-powered bike means it doesn't matter that his legs don't work very well, as he says with a big grin, he "can still go really fast". With this bike Harry can compete in his first all-corners race next month.

The 5-year-old, who starts school today, wears braces on his legs because of an illness two years ago that permanently paralysed them.

Normally he gets around with a walking frame, but Harry's family is raising money to buy him a bike, just like the one he's using now.

Harry's mother Vicki says a bike will last him about seven years.

"It's his independence and freedom and it will mean he can actually go out by himself or with his friends."

Harry and his sisters will race in the Lion Foundation's 5km Hope and Possibility run, on November 28, at North Harbour Stadium.

It's an integrated event for

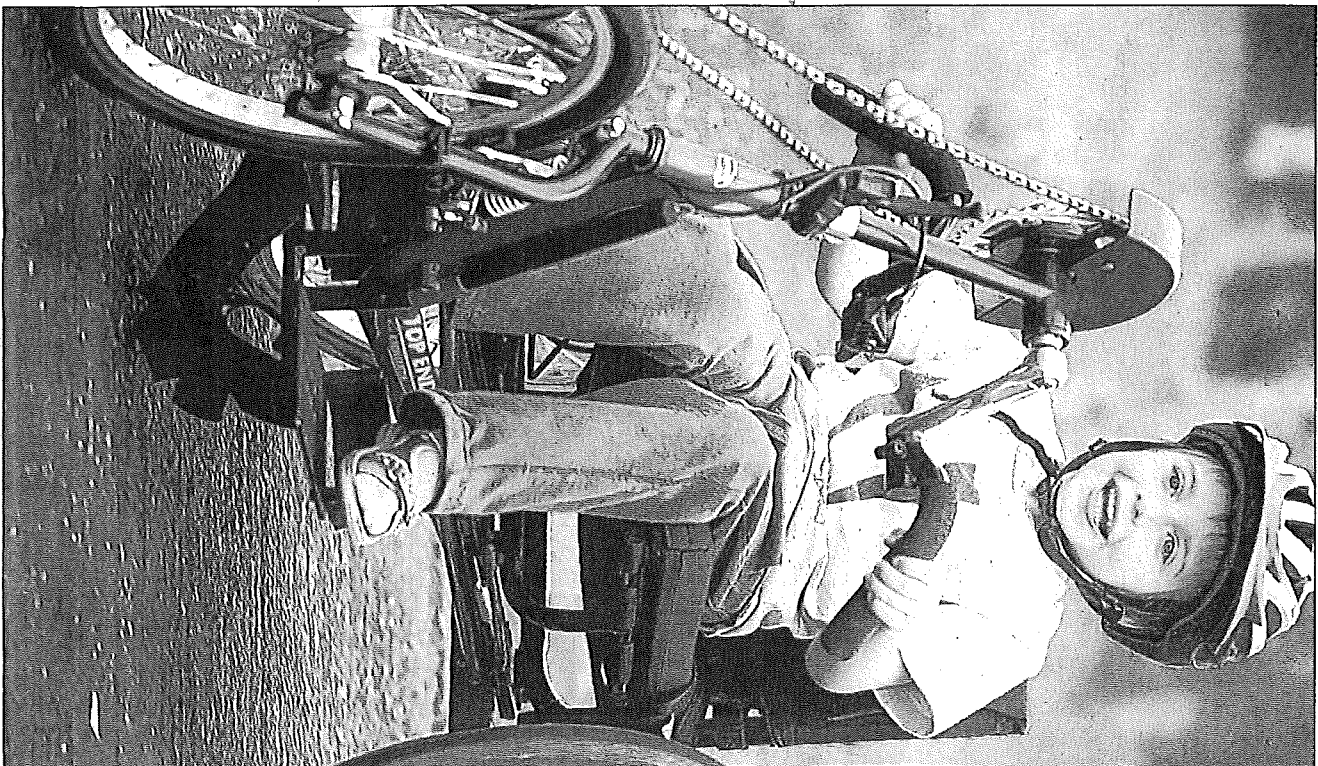
BIKE FUND

Harry still needs about \$4000 towards the cost of his bike. You can donate via internet banking to: Harry Randall, National Bank 06-0265-0177469-00.

And you can support Harry in his race. Find out more at: www.hopeandpossibility.org

runners, walkers, people in wheelchairs, hand-crank chairs, with guide dogs or who need a helper to compete with them.

Peter Loft is the chairperson and co-founder of Achilles International New Zealand, the volunteer organisation behind the race. He says



Achilles' mission is to get people with different disabilities into mainstream athletics.

"It's so other participants see our athletes as real people and it's for the self-esteem of our athletes."

Mr Loft says Achilles hasn't really grown in this country. So the race is a way to increase Kiwis' understanding of the organisation and provide more opportunities for people with disabilities to compete alongside able-bodied people.

"At Achilles, we treat everyone the same. We like to say a disability is not an excuse for failure, it's an opportunity to challenge yourself."

Mrs Randall says becoming involved with Achilles is encouraging her family which has had a rough couple of years.

"It just shows there's always a positive to be found, no matter what happens."

Achilles is helping the Randalls raise money to compete and Mr Loft says he hopes Harry will pass his bike to another child once he outgrows it.

There are sporting opportunities further afield, too. In Pakuranga, Halberg Trust Sport Opportunity adviser Stacey Roche is organising support for about 100 people who have disabilities to compete in the Sir Barry Curtis 10km run on Sunday.

"I think the barriers come from attitudes within society that people assume disabled people can't do that kind of event," says Ms Roche who has cerebral palsy.

"So we need to break down the barriers. Then people can do their own thing, once they've had a taste of support."