
Cancer victim, avid boarder hits the dune for new rage

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FLORENCE - "If you have anything you don't want sand in," Josh Tenge warned the group standing in a semicircle before him, "now's the time to take it off."

Tenge was halfway through a brief introduction to sandboarding at Florence's Sand Master Park, the world's first sandboarding park and one of the few places in the United States where it's possible to ride a Formica-laminated board down a sand dune.

Which explains why 16-year-old Kelsey Roble and her family took their first trip to Oregon on Monday. The Wausau, Wis., native was diagnosed last year with Hodgkins lymphoma and underwent nine months of chemotherapy and 29 days of radiation. Her trip to Oregon was courtesy of the Make-A-Wish Foundation, based in Phoenix, Ariz., which grants the wishes of children with life-threatening medical conditions.

Roble, whose cancer has been in remission for the past four months, chose sandboarding as her wish after watching it on MTV, she said. Kiteboarding was another option, but she decided on sandboarding because few people have ever done it.

Roble was about to join that elite group, but not before a lesson from Tenge, a professional sandboarder who holds the Guinness world record for the longest backflip on a sandboard - 44 feet, 10 inches.

Although it's rooted in surfing, the same way snowboarding and skateboarding are, sandboarding is easy to learn, Tenge said, because you don't go as fast. Point your arm and shoulder where you want to go and your hips and board will soon follow, he said.

Kelsey Roble went first, gliding straight down a short hill at the park without any indication that she was having a tough time. In fact, the avid snowboarder and wakeboarder made it look easy.

"Great!" Tenge said as Roble reached the bottom, with her family members quickly following suit.

"It's fun," Roble said, but added, "You have to watch where your weight is."

Roble and her family have toured the Heceta Head Lighthouse and Sea Lion Caves since arriving in Oregon on Saturday. They plan to kayak along the Siltcoos River trail.

For more information on the Make-A-Wish Foundation, visit www.wish.org.

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