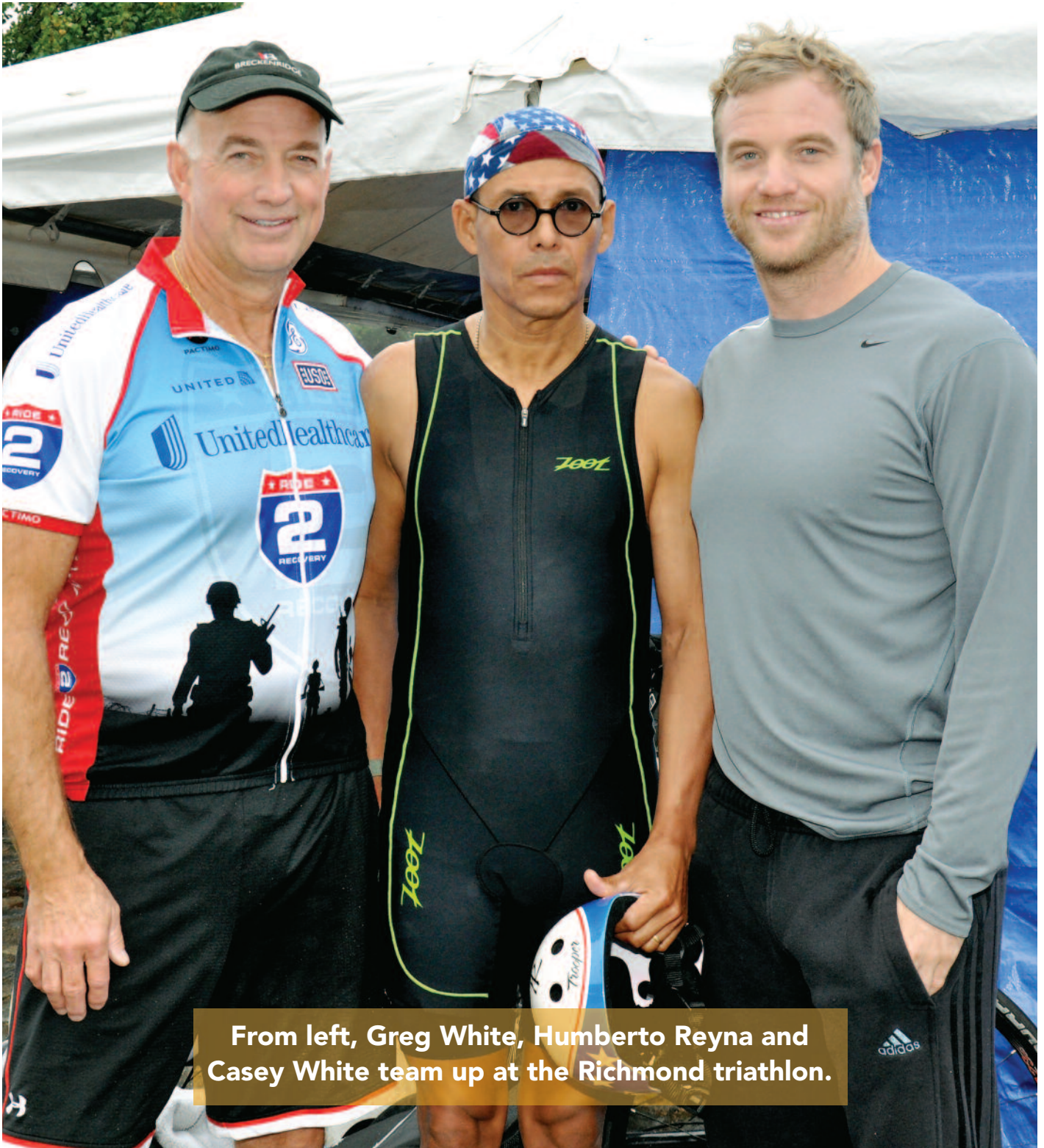


**'...I was a stranger and
you took me in ...'** — *Matthew 25:35*



From left, Greg White, Humberto Reyna and Casey White team up at the Richmond triathlon.

For co-op CEO and injured trooper, friendship blossoms in wake of accident

Ride 2 Recovery leads to lasting bond between Virginia co-op executive and North Carolina couple.

The bonds of friendship are sometimes forged in unexpected ways. Take, for example, the friendship of Greg White and Humberto and Kay Reyna.

Greg is president and CEO of Northern Neck Electric Cooperative in Warsaw. Humberto and Kay are North Carolinians who met Greg by chance at the 2015 Ride 2 Recovery Memorial Challenge.

Ride 2 Recovery is a groundbreaking physical and psychological rehabilitation-and-recovery program for injured veterans and first responders. Its mission is to save lives by restoring hope and purpose.

Humberto was a North Carolina State Trooper who, on Nov. 23, 2009, was sitting in his patrol car working an accident scene on Interstate 40. His cruiser was rear-ended and crushed by a hydroplaning car going 75 mph. The impact's concentrated, violent force caused traumatic brain injury that has forever changed his life.

Humberto's physical appearance was unchanged after the accident. But his thought processes were disconnected and jumbled, leaving him almost childlike in many ways, and unable to cope with normal life situations. His hearing can become super-sensitive to



Humberto Reyna in his trooper uniform before the accident.



Humberto's patrol car after the accident.

the point that he flees loud noises, and everyday human interactions, such as passing someone on a sidewalk, can cause him to panic. Because his physical appearance is normal, it was months before Humberto was approved for special rehabilitation services to suit the effects of his injuries.

"Before the accident, Humberto was very athletic," says his wife, Kay. "So his rehab doctors felt that it would greatly benefit him to get back into some of the activities he was involved with before the accident."

His favorite pre-accident activities included golf, swimming, running and bicycling. But, as Kay would learn, "There aren't many organized activities for people like Humberto." The problem is that, with his hypersensitivities and thought-processing difficulties, Humberto needs to do these activities with someone, to keep him on track. Otherwise, he might become distracted and go off course or otherwise become lost.

"It wasn't easy for him to get back out and participate in sports," says Kay. "Swimming came first, then golf, then running and biking. With the traumatic



Humberto and Kay Reyna at the October 2015 Richmond triathlon.



Casey and Humberto set out on the first of two road-race segments, as Kay cheers from the side.



Humberto nears the finish line in the first running segment.

brain injury, he lost all of his social skills, so doing these things is socially as well as physically therapeutic for him. Because of his condition, he never gets fatigued, never gets hungry or thirsty, and sleeps very little. Keeping up with him is physically exhausting. So the bike rides are wonderful for him. He just needs to be in a group.”

Participation in these physical activities, in a group setting, would be ideal therapy for easing him back into normal life situations. Finding a way to make this happen became Kay’s mission.

“I put a post on Facebook to see if there was anyone willing to participate in a triathlon with Humberto, and through Facebook found a guy in the Army, James Brown, who said he’d help,” Kay notes. “So we went and did the triathlon in Wilmington, North Carolina, together, and it was great. This happened the fourth year after the accident.”

Humberto and Kay were high school sweethearts and have been married 26 years. They have three children, ages 18, 21 and 24. Kay worked as a finance secretary at a North Carolina middle school before Humberto’s accident. “He’s what I do now,” she says with a smile and without a trace of hesitation.

Kay accompanies Humberto on all of his sports outings. She doesn’t participate, but she organizes the trips and watches out for Humberto’s safety.

After that first triathlon in Wilmington, Kay and Humberto met Mike Thomas, who is affiliated with Ride 2 Recovery. Although created to help injured service personnel, Ride 2 Recovery was expanded to include

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injured policemen, firefighters and other first responders. Humberto rode for three of the five days in the 2014 Memorial Challenge.

“Ride 2 Recovery leaves no one behind,” says Kay. “After all those years looking for a group that would accommodate Humberto and the difficulties he experiences because of his injuries, we’d found a place for him. It was wonderful to see all those veterans helping him. And I told Humberto, we need to walk through the doors that God opens.”

The door was opened wide at the 2015 Memorial Challenge. The ride started in Washington, D.C., on Memorial Day, and ended in Virginia Beach five days later. With the help of his Ride 2 Recovery family, Humberto rode all five days.

Greg White, a lifelong athlete and triathlon enthusiast, had entered the 2015 ride as a part of Virginia electric cooperatives’ support for disabled veterans and first responders.

“Right after I became Virginia’s representative on the board of directors of our National Rural Electric Cooperative Association (NRECA), one of its senior vice presidents, Peter Baxter, learned that I was a bicycling enthusiast and invited me to ride one day with the bikers on the Memorial Challenge,” Greg recalls. “Peter had been involved in NRECA’s support of the Ride 2 Recovery group and thought as a board member I would be interested. After that one-day ride in 2014, I decided I wanted to get involved in helping this organization and ride longer the following year, in 2015. That’s when I met Humberto and Kay.”

After the 2015 Memorial Challenge, Greg contacted the Reynas and invited them to come and stay with him and his wife, Carolyn, at their home in Tappahannock, to participate in a triathlon at nearby Naylor’s Beach.

“We took Greg up on his offer, and he and Carolyn were so wonderfully kind and hospitable. It was the beginning of a warm, special friendship,” notes Kay.

“It was through their friendship and really at that very point when they invited us in, as strangers, that I felt God was reassuring me personally that I was going to be okay and that we were going to make it through this,” she continues. “It was truly a life changer for me, because I could really feel God’s love through their actions ... the last six years have been the hardest thing I’ve ever been through.”



Humberto heads out on his special recumbent bike in the bicycling segment.



Greg nears the finish line in the bicycling segment of the triathlon.



Humberto after the final running segment of the triathlon.

Greg was particularly moved when, after the Reynas left to return to North Carolina, he found a gift from them, a small Bible wrapped in a hand towel. With the gift was a thank-you note quoting Matthew 25:35, and Kay had underlined the passage, "... I was a stranger and you took me in"

Greg and the Reynas got together again in October of last year, when Kay and Humberto joined Greg and his son, Casey, for a triathlon in Richmond. The event was scheduled to include a swim in the James River, followed by a bike ride, then a run. But because the James was swollen from heavy rains, the swim portion of the triathlon was replaced by a second, shorter run segment.

Humberto, Casey and Greg competed in the triathlon as a relay team, with Casey and Humberto doing the running segments and Greg and Humberto doing the biking segment. Casey, a fit 36-year-old, laughed as he crossed the finish line in the triathlon's final running segment, behind Humberto. "Keeping up with him wasn't easy. It was all I could do to keep him in sight," he said with a grin.

"Humberto and Kay will be our friends for the rest of our lives," Greg said after the October triathlon in Richmond. "Kay made the comment that God had blessed her and Humberto with meeting us. When my son Casey heard this, he said 'I'm thankful to be part of this experience, and I'd say we are blessed to have met them, as well.'"

Greg also invited Humberto and Kay to Northern Neck Electric Cooperative's annual all-employee day in November, where they talked about the Ride 2 Recovery program and Humberto's experiences.

"Life can change in an instant, and you never know what's going to happen," said Kay. She thanked the cooperative for its support of the Ride 2 Recovery event. Next, Greg asked Humberto if he wanted to say anything. Humberto took the microphone and, after a long pause to organize his thoughts, spoke to the assembled group.

"The injured, people like myself, need your help," he told the cooperative's employees. "We're here for a reason. Little things can make a big difference. I know this won't cure me, but it will give me a little relief. Sports is therapeutic: if I wasn't doing this, I'd be staying at home. And I hope that, through God's grace, I can touch someone else, maybe help somebody else."

He closed by thanking Greg. "He is my friend. He's a good friend. He's a good man." ■

Ride 2 Recovery



Seventh Cooperative Principle Underscores R2R's Mission

Electric cooperatives operate according to the seven cooperative principles. The seventh principle, "Concern for Community," underscores Virginia's electric cooperatives' support of Ride 2 Recovery and its mission.

Ride 2 Recovery was started in 2008 to help our Healing Heroes® by restoring hope and purpose. It has since been expanded to include first responders, such as firemen and policemen. It is a national organization and sponsors a variety of events from coast to coast.

Last year, Virginia's electric cooperatives assisted the five-day Memorial Challenge event from Washington, D.C., to Virginia Beach



in a variety of ways, from helping with luggage at overnight stops to providing water and other necessities at rest stations along the route.

This year, Virginia's electric co-ops will again be supporting Ride 2 Recovery, with employees of various cooperatives volunteering to help along the five-day ride, which takes place from May 30 to June 4.

There are still plenty of opportunities to help with this year's Memorial Challenge, so if you'd like to join the effort and lend a hand with this year's event, visit the website at ride2recovery.com for more details, or contact Kristen Beck at kristenb@ride2recovery.com.

Come Ride With Our Healing Heroes!

The public can ride alongside our Healing Heroes® on any of the 14 Honor Rides throughout the year, or as a one-day rider in any of the five Challenge events throughout the year. Visit the website for more information about all of the Ride 2 Recovery events and programs.

To show your support, you can donate to Ride 2 Recovery by visiting r2r.convio.net/goto/nreca and using the donate link. Here, you can also find specific information about the Memorial Challenge, or you can text the word RIDE to 41444 and follow the steps to donate. ■