



Kenny Harding, 9, works on a bicycle at Bike Works, a non-profit program in Rainier Valley.

PAUL KITAGAKI JR. / P-I

HATCHER: It allows kids who don't do that well to shine

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in a room full of 12-year-olds. But they seemed to know the rules. They paid attention. They took direction. They helped each other.

Some will be at the Bike Swap Saturday, checking out the bikes that come in. Kids bring their old bicycles to Genesee Park. A mechanic inspects them, gives them trade-in credit, and fits them with larger bikes.

It's primarily so people can swap bikes for a reasonable price, said Chris Heitmann, the Earn-a-Bike coordinator. "It's not a fund-raiser. If we make money, that's a bonus. It puts more kids through Earn-a-Bike."

We see such depressing news

these days about children who have no direction, who have no one to teach them responsibility or a work ethic. This shop gives these kids a place to go after school. It gives them role models. "It's a place where kids are learning, but it's not a formal environment," Heitmann said. "It allows kids who don't do that well in the classroom to really shine.

"And even if they don't do well, the better students help them."

How refreshing. What a day brightener to walk into this place, read the shop rules and see them being followed:

"Respect yourself, your instructors, your classmates, your shop, tools and all bikes."

"Act safely and responsibly."

"Clean up after your work space."

"Waste nothing."

"Tools must never leave the shop."

"Don't be afraid to ask questions."

"Enjoy your work and be proud of your accomplishments."

Saturday's fifth annual Kids Bike Swap is 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. at Genesee Park, 43rd Avenue South and South Genesee Street, Seattle. Kid-size bikes only. For more information about Bike Works, call 206-725-9408 or log on to www.scn.org/bikeworks.

P-I columnist Candy Hatcher can be reached at 206-448-8320 or candyhatcher@seattlepi.com