BIKE WORKS
FLATTIRE FLYER
FALL 2012 ISSUE #18
Building sustainable communities by educating youth and promoting bicycling

RIDE IT LIKE YOU EARNED IT!

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SHOP HOURS Tues – Fri: noon – 6pm / Sat: 11am – 6pm / Sun: 11am – 5pm

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ADVANCED TOURING CAMP: Cycling to Community...and Beyond!

Two years ago, as participants of our Advanced Touring Camp, nine triumphant teenagers returned to Bike Works proud to have completed a 400-mile bike tour from Seattle to southern Oregon. It was our longest bike tour to date and some youth said it was the hardest, most rewarding thing they’d ever done. Many said they wished they could keep on riding!

This summer, another group of nine excited and nervous teenagers—some veterans of the first tour and others joining the group for the first time—picked up where the last ride left off, continuing down the coast. Rolling south from just outside of Crescent City, California, these youth took off for another two-week, self-propelled and epic expedition. On the way down to San Francisco, they had the opportunity to pedal under the summer sun along gorgeous scenery, learn how to lead and be led, and most importantly, to push themselves and each other to grow.

“Never have we had so many laughs, sweat and tears, moments of silliness, and love all in one trip,” Tina Bechler, Program Director, shares. “These trips in particular allow for stuff that just doesn’t happen at drop-in during the school year: intimate, powerful things that happen when you’re living in a community of folks … day in and day out.”

For twelve days, these nine teenagers led each other down the coast and spent every waking hour together, diving head first into the experience. At the end of each day, a youth posed a question for the group. One was reading The Prophet, by Kahlil Gibran, and asked, “What is the link between your personal joys and sorrows?” The conversation that followed explored deep and powerful parts of their lives that were indeed both extraordinarily joyful and incredibly sorrowful. Each person’s compassion for his or her fellow trip mates grew, and with it, the group’s solidarity.

Over the six years we’ve led Advanced Touring Camps, youth have traversed over 2,000 miles. We watched 21 teenagers move on to college, work, and the vast and exciting world beyond high school. This last summer’s trip to San Francisco was no different—six of the nine youth headed on to college, the military, culinary school, and year-long trips abroad. And the next generation of Bicycle Leaders got their first taste of what they were capable of as riders, leaders, and advocates for each other.

At the end of the trip, one graduating youth said, “Next time let’s keep going and not come back.” It certainly is one of our greatest sorrows and greatest joys to see our youth cycle on. And we also couldn’t be more proud of each and every one of them, heading boldly on toward their next adventure. We are truly inspired watching these youth learn to trust each other and themselves, growing into awesome young adults. Now, where are we going next?
**PARTNERSHIPS:**

**Coyote Central**

Last year, folks at Coyote Central got in touch with Bike Works, hoping we could run some bike classes at their site. Coyote Central is a nonprofit in Seattle’s Central District, with a mission to “build the competence and confidence of adolescents through hands-on projects with creative professionals in the studio and out in the community.” Though it seemed like a match made in heaven, we didn’t have the staffing capacity to teach those classes and run our summer camps simultaneously.

Now, a year later, the situation has changed. With a large potential for partnership between us, and with more staff capacity this summer, we started talking again. Having just finished fundraising to build out their Central District campus, Coyote Central offered us the opportunity to teach classes in a new space dedicated as a bike classroom. We jumped at the chance! Our friend and volunteer, Max, had earlier developed a curriculum to teach bike wrenching at Coyote and our staff member, Leland (who is passionate about bikes and spray paint art), continued Max’s course, aptly named “Bikes: Beaters to Custom.” In this class, youth start with unfixed bicycles. Over the course of instruction, they strip the bikes down to the frames, sand and paint them, then learn how to build the bikes back up. By the end of the class, they each have a new, completely custom ride.

This fall we will continue running classes with Coyote Central—two Saturday sessions throughout the fall—with a planned 12 courses taught through 2013, serving close to 100 youth in the process. Partnerships like this one allow us to expand our reach in the city. With many amazing youth-serving organizations in Seattle, it’s a particular joy to collaborate with other excellent organizations to develop young leaders in our community.

Our classes generate a lot of interest, but it’s often difficult for students to get to us. We are proud to report that in 2011, we taught classes with 15 schools and community partners, and served 169 youth through partnerships. By the end of 2012, we will have partnered with 22 schools and community partners, and developed bicycle skills, peer mentoring relationships, and self-confidence in 326 young people.

**Earn-A-Bike!**

A student with her newly earned bike in the Bike Works classroom. She learned mechanical skills in class and then put her knowledge to use in fixing up her new ride. In 2012, we will serve over 75 youth through on-site Earn-A-Bike classes.

At Coyote Central, bikes are reassembled after they’re spray-painted, going from “beaters to custom.”
Adult & Volunteer Programs

Nathan wasn’t always a skilled bike mechanic. In fact, he first arrived at Bike Works as a participant in our Adult Basics Class (ABC) to learn the . . . well . . . the ABCs of mechanics. Nathan had no experience wrenching on bikes—he hadn’t ridden a bike in years! But after every class, having finished a lesson on hub overhauls or brake adjustments, he went home and practiced what he’d learned on a used bike he was assembling in his kitchen. Nathan didn’t worry about screwing up. If he came across an unexpected challenge, he’d use his trusty friend, the Internet, to problem-solve. If the problem persisted, he asked questions the following week in class. At the last class, when students are invited to bring in their own bikes and connect what they’ve learned to their own rides, Nathan had his instructors check his work. It was impeccable. He left that day on his first bicycle ride in over a decade!

Now, less than a year later, Nathan is a daily bike commuter. He continues to explore bike repair through our intermediate class—Developing Excellent Fixing-skills (DEF)—and volunteers at our weekly repair parties and community events. Now, he’s helping to teach those same classes where he first started learning, as an Adult Programs Assistant. In the last round of ABC, Nathan led three of the six lessons on his own. He’s done a lot of research to present multiple ways to look at repairs and the problems inherent in fixing used bicycles. His exploration and growth are an inspiration to us and we are incredibly excited to have Nathan around.

Recycle & Reuse Program

Bike Works’ Recycle & Reuse team turns old bicycles and parts back into working machines. We receive bicycles in a variety of ways, from individual donations to community bike drives to partnerships with recycling companies like CleanScapes. Some donated bicycles are refurbished to sell in our shop, which in turn supports our programming. Bikes are also given directly to individuals through partnerships with local nonprofits serving people in need, and through Bike Works programs for youth and adults.

Bikes-4-All! is one of those adult programs in which we partner with nonprofit groups providing support to marginalized communities, such as immigrants, people dealing with homelessness, and low-income individuals. Bikes-4-All! includes traffic handling skills, confidence building, and support in overcoming challenges to riding. We also provide the physical equipment: refurbished bikes, lights, helmets, and locks. We’ve found in these partnerships that we’re working with individuals who aren’t often represented in bike culture. Sometimes, the very act of biking feels threatening; a number of students express distrust and dislike of bikers and bicycles. What’s beautiful, though, is that as they learn what biking feels like, the distrust and dislike fade. One student recounted an experience in which she’d heckled bicyclists in the past, but at the end of the class, she didn’t want to get off of her bike! Our instructors learn as well, as we identify some of the barriers to biking within different cultures, helping us better serve these communities.

This year, we’ve taught classes through Horn of Africa, the Orion Center, and Catholic Community Services First Nations Housing. We will teach three more classes before the year end. Bikes-4-All! is just one of the many ways we redistribute bicycles to people who need them. In 2012, our Recycle & Reuse team will distribute approximately 500 bicycles to individuals through partnerships with local nonprofits and organizations, and through programs designed to reduce the barriers to bicycling.
Community Bike Shop

As a part of the Bicycle Leaders program, graduates of our Advanced Mechanics class who are 14-17 years old have the opportunity to apprentice in our bike shop. Homer O'Neil is one of those students. Homer grew up in Columbia City—you've very likely seen him around if you stop by the shop or roam the neighborhood. Homer started in our Earn-A-Bike class nine years ago, and continued to stop by our shop as he grew up. Then he amped up his participation by joining the apprenticeship program. First he worked on independent projects in the classroom, supervised by youth program staff. Homer completed his classroom time in the shortest period ever seen at Bike Works! He then worked on his required sixty hours of apprenticing that would allow him to interview for a paid shop position. Sure enough, Homer flew through his required time and was hired through the summer as a full-time mechanic.

Last winter, Bike Works helped Homer with a scholarship to attend the United Bicycle Institute in Oregon, where he earned Professional Shop Repair Certification. He came back even more excited about bikes—something that seemed nearly impossible, since he eats, breathes, and sleeps bicycles. Now Homer is a permanent fixture in the shop. Customers sing his praises regularly, saying he's friendly, patient, and will take the time to help them get what they need. It's a good thing, too, because our shop has been busier than ever. With all this demand, we had to become more and more efficient, but we know it's the one-on-one relationships that Homer and others excel at that keep customers coming back.

In 2011, our shop served over 6,000 customers and sold 1,291 refurbished bikes. This year, we will serve over 8,000 customers, helping people find “new” rides, fix up old ones, and get back on the road!

“Bike Works means a lot of different things to me. At one point it meant somewhere to go to get away from everything. But now, it’s like a family member that doesn’t age... it just grows.”

-Homer, Alumni & Staff

Family Biking

In 2012, Bike Works started a Family Biking Initiative to support parents and kids in riding bikes together. We hosted six Kidical Mass Family Bike Rides, brought family bikes to seven Family Bike Expos, and offered three seminars on family biking. We also started a small rental fleet of family bikes!
Before going through the programs at Bike Works, I had almost no self-confidence... Bike Works has drastically changed that. I have become a leader among my friends and peers at school and changed what I want to do with my future... working with people is not scary but amazing.

— Jabari, Age 15

Volunteer!

Help out in our office
Build bikes at weekly Volunteer Repair Parties
Volunteer at our events

DONATE BIKES AND BIKE PARTS!

A HUGE THANK YOU

to our 2011 & 2012 Donors & Volunteers!

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