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Back to School: Students Learn Bike Assembly

BY LYNETTE CARPIET

SANTA CRUZ, CA—It's back to school time. And for Kirk Bernhardt, that means juggling his time between teaching bike assembly at Harbor High and fixing bikes in Santa Cruz Bicycles' warranty department.

Although it's a busy time, it should be easier now, after having taught the pilot "Bike Shop at School" class of 22 students last January.

"I tried to prep them so they can walk into a bike shop and get a job as an entry-level mechanic in an assembly position," Bernhardt said. "We pulled the bikes out of boxes and assembled a \$300 mountain bike.

"I had some serious troublemakers but it was an opportunity to turn a kid

Continued on page 46

Suppliers Test Alternatives To Quick Release

BY MATT WIEBE

ORLANDO, FL—A spate of high-profile lawsuits over quick releases, along with a New Jersey legislator who wants to ban them, is forcing the industry to reexamine its traditional quick-release designs.

Fueling that review is a Web site, www.shokmoms.org, warning parents about their dangers. But for the first time in years suppliers have options.

Cannondale, Kona and Trek retailers are getting the first production bikes with Montague's Clix quick-release

Continued on page 39



Photo by Dieter Wertz

Cyclists frequently pass camels on the roads outside downtown Dubai where the cycling scene is growing.

Dubai Retailer Is Pumping Pedals Not Oil

BY JO BECKENDORFF

DUBAI, UAE—We had just told our Pakistani driver to take us to Wolfi's Bike Shop. "Bikes—you mean motorbikes?" he asked. "No, bicycles," we said. "Ah, motorcycles." "No, not motorcycles, push bicycles."

We gave up in hopes our driver would concentrate on the road. His speedometer was pegged at 75 miles per hour. But the speed limit was a more modest 45 as he sped past the modern skyscrapers lining Sheikh Zayed Road. For cyclists and pedestrians this has to rank as one of the most dangerous mile-long strips of shopping anywhere.

But as we pulled up to Wolfi's store, our driver told us that

a Harley Davidson shop was nearby. "No problem, I can take you there in five minutes!" he said.

Cycling in the desert? Talk to Wolfi Hohmann about Dubai's cycling scene. The German retailer is credited with helping develop Dubai's interest in bicycles, and his influence is felt throughout the seven emirates.

As we enter his Sheikh Zayed Road store, he takes us to his coffee bar. We chat during breaks as he greets customers and repairs bikes. Since opening in 2002, Hohmann has done everything himself working more than 10 hours a day, six days a week. And among cyclists in the Arab Emirates, he's be-

Continued on page 72

Metro Cities Give Yellow Bikes Another Go

BY SHERI HEIN

LEXINGTON, KY—Imagine walking out of a coffee shop and with the swipe of a card releasing a bike from a locked rack, hopping on, and then pedaling off to work.

Once there, park in a designated rack and go about your day. Each trip costs about 50 cents, and bikes are available at stations every few hundred yards.

This vision of green transportation is being explored in communi-

ties worldwide, most recently in Paris, which just introduced its public-use program called Velib.

With 10,600 bicycles stashed at 750 stations, it's the largest program of its kind. Users can purchase a pass for a year, a week or a day, with a one-day pass costing a bit more than a dollar.

The first half-hour is free and after that minor charges are assessed for each half hour the bike is out. Major cities such as Chicago, New York, San

Francisco and Washington, D.C., are exploring similar programs to ease traffic congestion in densely populated urban areas.

San Francisco has proposed bicycle stations adjacent to bus depots, making cycling a part of the city's extensive public transportation system.

On the opposite coast, the New York Bike-Share Project has proposed a Paris-style system for Manhattan,

Continued on page 36

Europe

p59

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Canada

p83



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Back to School...

Continued from page one

onto something," he added.

Initial reaction to the class has been positive. "Everyone I talked to on campus, all the teachers are pretty excited," Bernhardt said. "They're bringing their bikes to get worked on. The principal brought in some real roaches."

Aside from in-class lecture and hands-on projects, Bernhardt took students on fieldtrips (on their bikes) to local framebuilding shop Rock Lobster Cycles and to Santa Cruz Bicycles' headquarters. He also had industry guest speakers come in to talk about their experience.

The Bike Shop at School class was a labor of love for Bicycle Trip store owner Berri Michel, who had been working with the Santa Cruz school district, the Regional Occupational Program and various partners for some time to formulate the curriculum, get approval and set up the classroom.

Michel, who also started a local bicycle safety rodeo program, bikesmart.org to teach safe cycling to elementary students, said the idea came up when brainstorming how to get more people to run the safety rodeos.

"I thought it would be great if we could train youth to ride safe, help with their communities, teach about the benefits of bicycles as transportation, economic and health and wellbeing all while teaching them a vocation they can use to put themselves through school or just use in their lives," she said. "There has been auto shop forever, why not bike shop?"

As a shop owner, Michel also noticed how most retailers struggle to find trained and qualified bike mechanics. "An added benefit would be there will be more trained applicants for us to hire," she said.

Bicycle Trip recruited one of the students that was bike savvy and had mechanical aptitude even before the course was over. "We brought him in before he completed the semester," said Aaron Jacobs, Bicycle Trip's store manager. "He's doing good. A lot of people are stoked about the program because it's extremely hard to find an affordable employee that's knowledgeable."

Jacobs, 30, said he started through a similar program at his high school at age 16. "It created a great work ethic for me," he said. "Now I own a house in Santa Cruz and make a decent salary and ride my bike to work every day."

Michel pulled some grant money from a foundation her parents started to purchase the materials and tools needed. Giant provided new bikes at a discount while Park Tool provided all the tools and bike stands for 10 benches also at a discount. Each work bench is

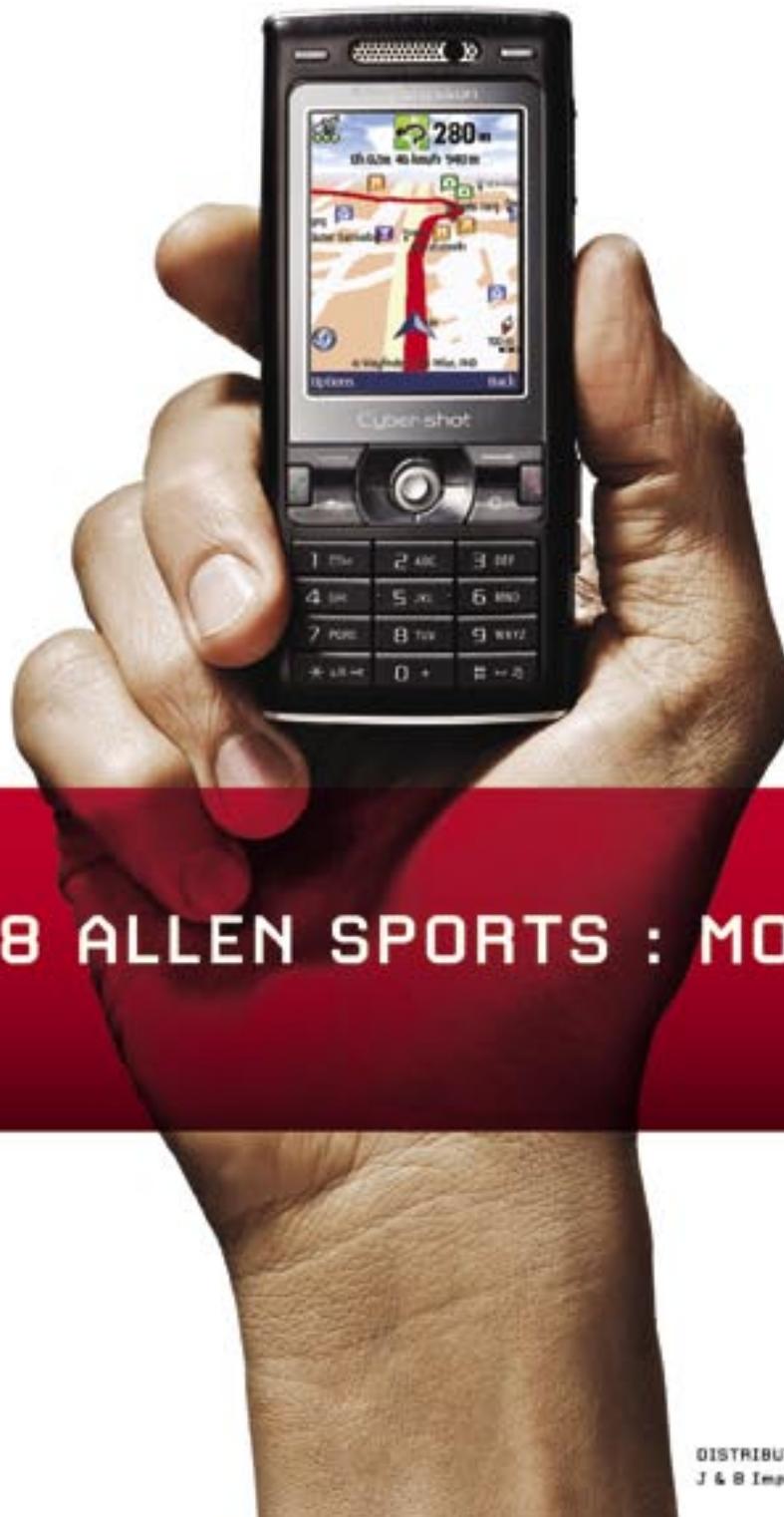
shared by two students.

The class, offered under the California Regional Occupational Program, is a five-credit elective course that counts toward graduation requirements. ROP is a unique program in the state designed to deliver career and technical education and training. Some 73 ROP programs exist throughout

Retailer Berri Michel said it cost about \$13,000 to outfit the 10 benches with shared tools.



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California.

ROP teachers must have years of industry experience in the subject they teach. And ROP students are mostly high school juniors and seniors.

R. Rieber, director of the Santa Cruz ROP, said Santa Cruz's culture and the fact that many bike companies such as Fox and Giro are based in the area played a major role. "Part of it was it was just a right fit for Santa Cruz culture. There has to be something indicat-

ing it's good for students in terms of the labor market," he said.

An advisory board made up of industry members from Fox and Santa Cruz Bicycles also provided input. "Every ROP class has to have an advisory board of industry people so we make sure we're putting something out there good for the economy and good for the labor market," Rieber said.

Feedback, interest and participation in the class has been so positive that

Harbor High will offer two Bike Shop at School classes this fall, one will be open to students from other high schools.

Michel hopes the class will eventually extend to four semesters and cover not only beginning assembly and emergency road repairs, but intermediate assembly and beginning repairs and diagnostics, continuing repairs and diagnostics, and finally, student projects, community projects and internships.

"One of my dreams being an em-

ployer is to develop a certificate system for mechanics so that when we have an applicant and they say they have X certificate, I would know they have completed 20 headsets at a grade B level or say in X amount of time," she said.

"I think a national certificate system would give mechanics better credibility and hopefully better pay," she added.

Industry companies are cheering her on and offering their support. Bill Armas of Park Tool said he's often approached by private schools, camps, after-school programs and even juvenile rehab centers that want to offer similar programs, however, Michel's vision really got him excited.

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Photo: TERRY TOLE



For many students, English wasn't their first language so Kirk Bernhardt used visuals and created his own handouts.

"The cool thing is it's within the public school classroom and the teacher is on the district payroll," he said.

"What we need to work on is how to find the money and how bike shops can take this program and duplicate it in their own markets," he added.

Giant's parts and accessories sales manager, Allen Needle, was equally impressed after having seen the classroom just a couple of weeks ago. "I was completely blown away," he said. "I understood what Berri was trying to do, but until you walk into the classroom with 10 benches, with the repair area with Park Tools, it didn't hit home how professional and exciting the program is."

Needle believes the program is still in its infancy and could flourish in other parts of the country.

Michel is already taking a few steps in that direction. She's developing a "how to get started in your community" starter pack for retailers that will include curriculum and lesson plans—something she hopes to present at future industry events.

And like all labors of love, "it is fun but not done," she said.

Retailers interested in starting a class in their community can contact Michel at berri@bicyclertrip.com or go to www.bicyclertrip.com. **BRAIN**

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