

Editorials

Making a Commitment to Advocacy Need Not Be Big Potatoes

Industry companies are throwing their weight behind efforts to encourage more Americans to ride bicycles.

Interbike upped its commitment to advocacy by pledging millions of dollars to Bikes Belong over the next 10 years.

Trek strengthened its support of advocacy with its One World, Two Wheels program. It plans over the next three years to donate \$1.6 million combined to IMBA and the League's Bike Friendly Communities program.

Meanwhile, the rank of companies that support Bikes Belong with annual

membership dues continues to grow.

The leaders of our industry are sowing the seeds for a renewed commitment to growing our industry through advocacy. Their contributions are not small potatoes. But will their investments be enough to push the entire industry forward?

Interbike and Trek have set an example for other industry companies to think about unique ways that they can help get more Americans to ride bikes.

And there's no better time to get involved than at Interbike.

Interbike is the annual gathering place for the industry—and it will remain so for the foreseeable future. While we tend to think of the show in terms of retailers and suppliers, Interbike draws another facet of the industry—advocacy organizations.

Interbike provides free lobby space to more than 20 non-profit groups. Among those groups stationed in "Advocacy Row," there is a cause for everyone.

If your heart lies in protecting trail access, off-road groups such as IMBA, SORBA and Minnesota Off-Road Cy-

clists will do the trail work.

If your passion is for inspiring youth, Trips for Kids and Sprockids will share the sport.

And if the array of groups and missions is too confusing, Bikes Belong promises to separate the wheat from the chaff and provide grants where they make sense.

Big companies have raised the bar; but commitments need not be big potatoes. With even modest support from each manufacturer, supplier and retailer we can ensure the industry is not just stable but growing.

Growth of Mountain Biking Requires an Instructional Standard

BY CLIFF KROLICK

As the owner and operator of a cross-country mountain biking tour center, I can't help but notice how many folks show up here without a clue as to how to set up their mountain bike and the proper ways to ride and use it safely. Even experienced road riders and seasoned mountain bikers still flounder.

A novice can walk into a shop and purchase a mountain bike just as anyone can buy a road bike, but riding a bike on a road is very different than riding a mountain bike on single-track. Many would-be enthusiasts have no place to learn, and more importantly, never receive reliable instruction on how to use their bike correctly and safely.

There's a lot to be learned before you can start to enjoy mountain biking and use the bike for what it was meant to be used. Many folks quit out of frustration or from "the school of hard knocks," with too many falls. Just knowing how to ride a bike is not the same as being

able to use a mountain bike safely and with any degree of expertise.

It's my contention that good reliable instruction is the key to expanding mountain bike sales and the customer base. I believe a standardized, highly effective, introductory instructional program designed for first timers would keep riders involved and would boost the industry.

Let's take the ski industry. At the onset of the sport of skiing there was little or no standardization of instruction, and I'm certain that there were little if any trails and likely no lifts. Over time, the "ski mountain" was born and lifts were introduced to get folks up the hill faster and more often. The ski industry quickly realized the importance of good trails and instruction in promoting its own growth and popularity. Over time, techniques were fine-tuned, instruction was standardized, and trail designs that offered something for everyone became the norm.

This process evolved slowly but the

ski industry came together to develop standards that could be applied at any downhill ski facility. This same model could successfully be applied to the bicycle industry.

It's time for bike manufacturers to join those of us on the front lines that are really teaching the general consumer how to use, be successful and have fun on mountain bikes. If the ski industry can do it, there's no reason why the mountain biking industry cannot offer a standard system of instruction and provide qualified personnel to administer it.

A key part to this program would be listing and supporting various locations, venues, outfitters and trained instructors throughout the country. The consumer, upon purchase of their bike, would be provided with a list of approved locations and instructors, and be highly encouraged to seek them out before venturing off alone and uninformed. Official providers recognized by the industry would be able to

deliver a consistent basic instructional program. A good program should consist of at least two parts: Adjustment and set up of a rider's new bike for safe cross-country riding and a standardized thorough introductory lesson.

I challenge bike manufacturers to work with outfitters like myself who've been involved with touring and instruction. The crux of the sport has always been cross-country mountain biking and we're certainly expending a lot of dollars and energy to protect and preserve trail access. It's time that we ensure the future of the sport by offering a reliable industry standard of instruction available to the consumer at the time of purchase.

Cliff Krolick is the founder of Back Country Excursions of Maine, a guided mountain biking cross-country touring and vacation facility. For details on his instructional program, check out "Ring Of Success" at www.bikebackcountry.com/about/skills_tips.html#ring.

SHOP TALK



Subscription rates and inquiries: *Bicycle Retailer & Industry News* (ISSN 1069-8493, USPS 010-073) is published 18 times per year (Monthly in January, February and September through December, and semi-monthly March through August) by NBDA Services, Inc., 777 W. 19th St. Suite O, Costa Mesa, CA 92627. Subscriptions are free to qualified bicycle retailers, distributors, wholesalers, importers, manufacturers and others allied to the field in the U.S. Subscriptions for non-qualified readers in the U.S. is \$68 per year. A one-year foreign subscription, payable in U.S. dollars, is \$82 in Canada and Mexico. For all other countries (Airmail only) it is U.S. \$182. Two-year subscriptions receive a 20 percent discount: U.S., \$109; Canada/Mexico, \$131; overseas, \$291. Periodical postage paid at Laguna Hills, CA 92653 and additional mailing offices. POSTMASTER: Send changes of address to *Bicycle Retailer & Industry News*, P.O. Box 1294, Skokie, IL 60076-8294. Editorial and advertising offices: 25431 Cabot Road, Suite 204 (949)206-1677. For address changes, single copy sales, subscription information, and other customer service inquiries, write to *Bicycle Retailer & Industry News*, P.O. Box 1294, Skokie, IL 60076-8294 or call (847) 763-9050. Printed in the USA.