



We Provide the Ride

Media Information 20 February 2008 QBP

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MEDIA RELEASE

Biking Toward a Better Life

QBP and Full Cycle Use Bikes to Transform Lives of Homeless Youth

QBP has entered an agreement to fund Full Cycle, a Minneapolis-based outreach program that offers free bikes to homeless and at-risk youth as a way to engage them with vitally needed social services. The program, which is run by Pillsbury United Communities (PUC), a charitable nonprofit, is currently available by appointment only. With the new financial support, Full Cycle will greatly expand the reach of the program, hiring a fulltime bike mechanic and creating a series of beginning, intermediate, and advanced bicycle mechanic courses. Working with volunteers from QBP, they will transform the operation into a modest retail business that repairs and sells used bicycles. It is slated to open in May.

Founded in 2002 by Matt Tennant, a social worker, Full Cycle uses the promise of a renovated bike to connect homeless youth ages 23 and under with food shelves, places to stay, basic medical care and other social services available through Pillsbury House, a PUC neighborhood center in South Minneapolis.

“Kids love bicycles,” Tennant observed. “Their interest in bikes brings them to our door. We simply offer them the chance to earn a bike by learning how to refurbish it. For some, that's as much as they want. For others, we're able to connect them to a wide range of community resources.”

For the past two years QBP has supported Full Cycle, which operates from a converted auto shop on 35th and Chicago in South Minneapolis, with parts, tools and other basic supplies. Late in 2007, the QBP Advocacy, Community Service and Environment (ACE) committee decided to ramp up its commitment and provide a significant level of funding.

“Matt is doing a good job reaching homeless kids right now,” said Gary Sjoquist, who oversees QBP advocacy efforts. “The ACE committee felt there was an opportunity to extend the program further through a donation of manual labor and other resources. By hiring an experienced bike mechanic, Matt will be able to focus on youth entrepreneurship, job training and connecting youth to employment opportunities.”

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We Provide the Ride

In the spring, QBP will host a work party at Full Cycle where volunteers and some homeless youth will outfit the space to support a retail operation. QBP will help the business develop a network to obtain used bikes from a variety of sources.

“In this part of the city, there are few bike shops,” said Sjoquist. “We believe a small business can sell used bikes, provide tune-ups and offer basic commuting needs like tubes, tires and chains. The beauty of this approach is that we can also develop a small revenue stream to help offset costs.

Beyond learning a trade, participants will gain valuable business skills like conducting sales and customer service, running a cash register and helping with the day-to-day management of the shop. Graduates of the program will have an opportunity for paid internships in local bike shops that could lead to employment. Some students of the program will receive a stipend from Pillsbury House during their internship.

Minneapolis bike shops interested in supporting a mechanic through internship or employment, or donating used bikes should contact ace@qbp.com.

About QBP

Based in Bloomington, MN, QBP is a leading distributor to the cycling industry. QBP offers domestic and international retailers a wide array of products and services including a 1,500-page catalog, a robust online ordering system, a renowned custom wheel service, a specialty bike-building program and more. QBP continues to be a vigorous advocate for the cycling industry. For more information, please contact Jo Wright, director of marketing at 952 -941-9391, or visit: www.QBP.com.

About Full Cycle

Full Cycle is a free bike program that reaches out to homeless and street-dependent youth ages 23 and under, giving them an opportunity to build and maintain their own free bike. Full Cycle provides time and space for homeless youth to take a break from the stress of street life and gives them an opportunity to learn, create and have fun.

About Pillsbury United Communities

Pillsbury United Communities is a unique nonprofit organization in Minneapolis. With twelve locations, including six neighborhood centers, two supportive housing projects, a professional live theatre, and an employment and training center, Pillsbury United Communities is positioned to address the complicated issues and concerns faced by the 35,000 people who walk through our doors each year. Learn more at www.puc-mn.org.