

SPRING 2008

INGEAR

THE NEWSLETTER OF PEDALS FOR PROGRESS



ERNIE SIMPSON, OUR MOST DEDICATED VOLUNTEER

Long before there was Pedals for Progress, there was Ernie Simpson, who collected old bikes, fixed them up, and gave them to poor children in his community at Christmas. He began doing this in the 1950's. Over the years, as word got out and people donated more and more bikes, Ernie faced a situation that we're very familiar with here at Pedals for Progress—an abundance of used bikes. His barn was overflowing with them. Needing a means to give them away, he found us. That was in 1996.



Ernie initially gave us fifty-five bikes. These days, he's our largest single source of bikes, collecting close to a thousand a year for us. More recently, he and one of his friends began refurbishing sewing machines for our sister project, Treadles for Progress. Just like he does with bikes, he also provides us with more sewing machines than anyone else. And in addition to putting the machines in working order, he has compiled a library of instruction manuals for all the makes and models that come his way. Ernie includes one with every sewing machine he gives us.

Typically, the bikes we receive come to us as-is, needing some work, and always needing to be prepped for shipping. The bikes we get from Ernie, on the other hand, are practically as good as new. He and his helpers take the time to fix up each bike and put it in good working order, even replacing parts where needed, then they prep each bike for shipping. As if Ernie doesn't do enough already, he also raises \$10 per bike—just like we do at our collections—to help us with shipping.

Ernie's community service extends well beyond his work with bikes. He taught machining at the Paradise School for Boys, where they named the machine shop after him. He also taught lawn mower maintenance and landscaping from his shop in Gettysburg. And during the 1960's, he established a local rehabilitation program for juvenile offenders.

In 1997, we honored Ernie with our annual Pedal Wrench Award. But we aren't the only ones to recognize Ernie's altruism and service to his community. In 2002, he was given the Lifetime Peacemaker Award from the Interfaith Center for Peace and Justice in Gettysburg, Pennsylvania, his hometown. And in 2005, the Rotary Club of Gettysburg presented him with the Dwight D. Eisenhower Award. In addition to these accolades, Ernie was named a Paul Harris Fellow, received an award from the Adams County Bar Association, and received citations sponsored by Senator Terry Punt and Representative Steve Maitland, of Pennsylvania.

Ernie's devotion to helping others is remarkable, and inspiring. That he's 87 years old, and working as hard as he does for us and others, makes his story even more remarkable and inspiring. He's touched numerous lives with his kindness and generosity, and we're grateful that he chose to help us—thousands of families overseas live better lives because of him.



Pictures: Ernie, right, with Charles from Uganda (top left); Ernie, center, with two friends and bikes about to be delivered to P4P warehouse (above).

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PRESIDENT'S LETTER

Dear Friend,

The challenges at Pedals for Progress never end. But then again, people don't work for nonprofits to make lots of money, and you certainly don't start one for that reason. I started Pedals for Progress because so many people in the developing world make so little. And in the Peace Corps, while stationed in Ecuador, I saw first hand what something as simple as a bike could do to improve a poor person's livelihood.

The father of my host family was the only person in our town with a bicycle. As a carpenter, he could carry his tools easily, travel further to jobs, and do so without much physical wear and tear. Best of all, he was able to earn more money, simply because his mobility meant more job opportunities. Years of walking great distances on a daily basis are not kind to an individual, not financially, and not physically either. Pedaling those miles means a fourfold increase in mobility, and a much more productive life.

This idea still inspires me. So, making sure poor people have bikes for transportation is what we continue to do. It's our *raison d'être*.

The other side to what we do is environmental. Without us, there'd be thousands of tons of perfectly usable bicycles rusting in our landfills. Instead, those on the receiving end of our work get transportation that doesn't pollute. Everybody wins—the people who donate bikes, the people who receive our bikes, the communities here in the U.S. that have sensible means to dispose of them, and the communities where our bikes end up. Of course, Pedals for Progress wins, too, because we know what we do works.

And that brings me back to the challenging part—raising the money needed to make this work. For that, we look to our supporters. This year our already tight budget was hit with the dramatic increase in the price of diesel. No small matter since every mile we ship a bike is fueled by it.

Spring is here, and our collection season is underway and busier than ever. Regardless of the price of diesel, we'll be shipping bikes! We hope we can once again count on your help too. It's only with your help that we can lift thousands of families out of poverty.

Sincerely,



Dave Schweidenback,
Pedals for Progress Founder and President

THE GREEN SIDE OF PEDALS FOR PROGRESS: CARBON OFFSETTING, OR PREVENTING A CARBON ONSET?

At a recent Pedals for Progress board meeting, the question of whether P4P bikes offset carbon came up. It wasn't an aspect of our work that we necessarily considered before, apart from the idea that our bikes, like all bikes, are simply a nonpolluting means of transportation. But can we say we provide a means of carbon offsetting?

The answer is the bikes we ship overseas aren't replacing cars. For some recipients, they may replace the use of public transportation. But our bikes almost always replace walking. And walking, like cycling, is carbon neutral.

Since carbon offsets are quantifiable, it would certainly be helpful for us to say one P4P bike offsets so many pounds of carbon dioxide. One way we can look at this is by comparing bikes to cars. According to Terra Pass, the average car and driver in the U.S. create 12,000 lbs. of carbon dioxide driving 12,000 miles per year—one pound of CO₂ per mile. The average recipient of a P4P bike commutes roughly 4,000 miles a year. So, it could be said that every bike we ship has a potential carbon offset of about 4,000 lbs. a year. That is, if our bikes were replacing cars.

Our bikes, however, can help limit the onset of a large carbon footprint. While the advent of cars in developing countries is inevitable, when bikes are there first, as a standard mode of transportation, an appropriate infrastructure follows. Too often the developing world emulates the transportation model we

have here in the U.S., where our communities—suburbs, cities, and rural regions alike—are designed as a car-centric system, and any infrastructure to accommodate bikes is added as an afterthought. Our hope is that shipping bikes to the developing world will promote bike-friendly infrastructures, and slow the advance of the carbon footprint that comes with cars.

This is exactly what happened in Rivas, Nicaragua, where we've shipped over 13,000 bikes. As a result of so many cyclists there, they built dedicated and protected bike lanes in their roads, as well as areas for bike parking. This, along with the presence of so many cyclists, makes being on a bike much safer and easier, and serves to encourage even more bicycle use in that region. It also means bikes are a permanent part of their transportation system, and an easy alternative to cars.

Most of our recognition has come from the humanitarian aspect of providing basic transportation to the world's working poor. But we've always had a pro-environmental streak at Pedals for Progress. After all, we promote clean transportation by recycling used bikes. While we may not be able to measure the carbon offset of our bikes, we have seen entire communities benefit immeasurably from our bikes. And we're doing what we can to see this happen even more.



Image courtesy of www.mingled.co.uk.



VISITING OUR PARTNERS IN GHANA

by Dave Schweidenback

There is no sleek air-conditioned tube when you disembark from the jet at the Tema airport. Rather, you walk down a set of circa-1950 mobile stairs to the hot tarmac, and you instantly realize you're in a third world country as the pungent smell of wood-fuel cooking stoves assaults your nose. The airport was bedecked with the red, yellow and green Ghanaian flags to celebrate Ghana's hosting the 2008 Africa Cup Football tournament. And in the distance, what looked like a thick fog was limiting visibility. It was the time of "harmattan", when dry winds from the Mediterranean envelope Ghana in a shroud of dust picked up during a 1,500-mile journey across the Sahara.

Gary Michel, Pedals for Progress's Bike Collection Manager and I met our Ghanaian colleague, Kwaku Agyemang, just outside of the terminal and jumped into the taxi waiting to bring us into the city and to WEBike headquarters, our Ghanaian partners. However, our taxi was instantly brought to a crawl as we plunged into totally gridlocked traffic. This is the permanent state of Accra's roads. At times the capital seems to have more square footage of cars than pavement. And few motorists were obeying traffic rules we take for granted here in the United States.

So it was a relief to escape the congestion of the capital on our third day there and journey into the countryside to meet recipients of the bicycles we've shipped to WEBike. As soon as we reached the edge of greater Accra, the perpetual traffic jam disappeared and we had open roads before us.

We were headed to the house of a native herbalist, or healer, Kwaku Osei. Driving along the main paved road to Oda, our driver and the

operations manager of WEBike, Ada Annane, suddenly turned onto a red dirt, dusty path leading through the forest. There were no signs and no markings to indicate it was there. Our path not only seemed too small for a car, but it was only drivable because this was the middle of their dry season. Four or five miles later the path just ended, and there, a hundred feet ahead, were three mud shacks with thatched palm roofs. This was our destination. This was where Kwaku and his extended family lived.

The air was thick with the smell of a small still distilling palm wine into a much more potent brew. We sat on crude wooden benches under a palm frond roof in front of Kwaku's house. On the wall behind him hung a series of talismans that he used for treating locals who sought his healing powers for a variety of ailments. All of the bikes were out in the fields while we were there, which immediately indicated how useful they were. Kwaku confirmed this saying the bikes had a very positive effect, helping people move more produce to markets, and giving them access to buyers they didn't have before. But it was quite clear that they needed help maintaining their bikes. As more bikes arrive in Ghana, and specifically in Kwaku's vicinity, WEBike will train a local mechanic and help establish a local bike repair shop. More bikes are needed to make such a business viable.

Our first day in the countryside ended with a meal of FuFu, which is pounded casava dumplings in a goat stew. Our hosts Kwaku and Ada didn't believe two white guys from New Jersey would sit and eat this traditional meal with our fingers. And although Gary, a vegetarian, avoided the meat, this turned out to be one of the best meals we had during our entire trip.

The next day, we left Kwaku and drove 200 miles from the coast to the Muslim village of Alajipapa in Ghana's plateau region. The majority of the inhabitants here are subsistence farmers tending the land of the local king, and sharing the produce with him. This system of sharecropping is still the harsh reality for many of the rural inhabitants of Ghana. Yet it's also a relatively harmonious arrangement.

It was Friday, the Muslim holy day, and the whole community had just finished their mid-morning prayers. All of the elders came out to greet us. Dressed in their immaculately clean, holy day finery, they were a stark contrast to the poor mud huts, and red clay streets of the village. This was obviously a very poor town, but its people had a tremendous sense of pride and serious hopes for their future. As we discussed their needs and the utility of the bicycles they had received, they said they looked upon bicycles as progress, and were very interested in receiving more. The bikes were making their lives more productive. Like those in Kwaku's village, here too, the mobility of cycling helps them move much



more produce than walking. The bikes they have are used collectively by the adults in the community. Ideally, they'd each have their own bike.

As we moved across the countryside down to Cape Coast and then back inland to Kumasi, the royal city of the Asanti Kings, we made many stops to visit our bicycles and their new owners. One such encounter was in the town of Asuman Kumansu. To get there, we drove through miles of oil palm groves and coco tree orchards—coco production for

chocolate is a major cash crop—and arrived at three houses, where luckily, the owner of one of our bicycles was at home. His bike was an immaculate grey Schwinn. I knew it came through our system because there was a sticker on the seat tube advertising Jay's Bike Shop in Westfield, New Jersey. As they do every year, the Westfield Rotary Club held a bike collection last September. Did the original owner of this bike ever imagine it would become the major means of transportation for a poor family in the middle of the Asanti highlands of Ghana?

For me this is what Pedals for Progress represents. We are the link between donors in the United States who want to help the poor of the developing world. Seeing the sticker for Jay's Bike Shop brought that



idea home to me loud and clear. Whoever donated that bike with the hope of changing someone's life for the better did exactly that. And I was looking at the proof.

Pictures: Dave and Gary in Ghana (previous page); Two Ghanaians with the P4P bike they share (top right); A view of Accra from WEBikes (top left); Gary in front of used bikes for sale (bottom left); The bike collected in Westfield, N.J. that's now in Ghana (above).

THINK GAS IS EXPENSIVE? YOU SHOULD SEE DIESEL

During the last year, the price of gas went up 26%. That’s a lot. Certainly our paychecks didn’t go up that much. And it’s not likely our investment portfolios did either. But gas sure did. And we all felt it at the pump, as they say, and we’re still feeling it. But if you think gas prices are high, diesel is even higher. It increased 42% in 2007. If you buy diesel, and we buy diesel, it got your attention.

Pedals for Progress could be described, in one sense, as a nonprofit shipping company. We ship recycled bikes overseas. And in order to do that, we rely on diesel every mile of the way. This starts with the box truck we use to bring the bikes from collections to our warehouse. On some weekends this means four or five collections. Once at our facility, a forty-foot overseas container gets filled with bikes, connected to a big rig, and driven to the nearest port, which in our case is Newark, N.J. That trip requires diesel, too. At the port, the container is loaded onto an overseas freighter and sails for its final destination thousands of miles away. All of which are diesel-powered. All of which, we pay for.

In 2007, we were fortunate that the average cash donation with each bike went up to over \$11. This helped, but it still didn’t keep pace with the increase in the price of diesel. The average cost to get a bike to one of our overseas partners is \$30. Since diesel prices aren’t likely to decrease, we’ll be budgeting more for fuel this year. Another solution, and a pipe dream of ours, is to convince people to donate \$30 with every bike. Of course, we’ll happily settle for \$20.

Follow the Money — Shipping a Bike to an Overseas Partner

With each bike we collect, we request a \$10 donation. This helps defray the expense of running the collection, processing the bike, and trucking it to our warehouse. From our warehouse, it takes another \$10 to load the bike onto a tractor trailer and deliver it to the freighter. And finally, \$10 more gets the bike to one of our overseas partners.



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John Elias in Ewarton, Jamaica with our P4P partners.

NEW PROGRAM IN JAMAICA GETS ASSIST FROM OUR FRIEND IN COLORADO

A little over ten years ago, John Elias, a Peace Corps alum who had been stationed in Jamaica, ran several collections for Pedals for Progress in his hometown in the Colorado Rockies. Doing so nearly crowded himself out of his auto repair business. Storing large numbers of bikes is one of the hazards of recycling used bikes. Since then, John has been a steady contributor to us and a friend of the organization. So, when we had the opportunity to launch a new program in Ewarton, Jamaica, John's hometown when he was in the Peace Corps, we didn't hesitate to call on him to help the process. And we're grateful that he obliged. With John's help, we were able to get this program on board.

SUPPORTING PEDALS FOR PROGRESS, WELL-SPENT MONEY SPENT WELL

As a nonprofit, we depend on charitable donations for a large part of our operating expenses. We also happen to be a very thrifty organization. Year after year we manage to use 78% of funds raised toward program services. That's 78 cents of every dollar we receive used to get bikes overseas. As nonprofits go, this is a very high percentage, and something we're proud of, because it means the money you donate is used as effectively as we can to benefit as many people as possible.

**TO MAKE A SECURE ONLINE DONATION VISIT
WWW.P4P.ORG AND CLICK ON DONATE.**

Does Your Company Match Donations?

Most companies match charitable donations. Your HR department can tell you whether yours does. If so, it can mean doubling or even tripling your contribution. For a nonprofit like us, that's a huge help.

MISSION STATEMENT

Pedals for Progress envisions a day when:

1. North America recycles over half of the 5 million used bicycles discarded each year, as well as unused parts and accessories for reuse overseas.
2. Poor people in developing countries have bicycles to get to work, obtain services, and meet other needs.
3. The bicycle is an effective tool for self-help in all developing countries.
4. Trade regulations enhance international commerce in bicycles and parts.
5. Policy makers in developing countries respect and support non-motorized transportation.

Our objectives are:

1. To enhance the productivity of low-income workers overseas where reliable, environmentally sound transportation is scarce, by supplying reconditioned bikes at low cost.
2. To promote in recipient communities the establishment of self-sustaining bicycle repair facilities employing local people.
3. To provide leadership and innovation throughout North America for the recycling of bicycles, parts, and accessories.
4. To reduce dramatically the volume of bicycles, parts, and accessories flowing to landfills.
5. To foster environmentally sound transportation policies that encourage widespread use of bicycles worldwide.
6. To foster in the North American public an understanding of and a channel for responding to the transportation needs of the poor in developing countries.

Approved 12/08/96.

THE PEDALS FOR PROGRESS ONLINE STORE IS OPEN

Here's another way to support the work we do. All proceeds go toward domestic collection expenses.

This 12-ounce, ceramic coffee mug is only \$15, shipping included. Go to www.p4p.org/store to see more.



For more information visit www.p4p.org.



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