

FALL 2010

# INGEAR

THE NEWSLETTER OF PEDALS FOR PROGRESS



## PROGRAMI I ALTERNATIVE SOCIALE STIMULUESE TIRANA, ALBANIA

PASS, located in the Albanian capital city Tirana, was established in 2002 with the goal of encouraging community action and raising public awareness of local social and environmental issues. Some of their activities include operating the Welcoming Center for Families in Need, involving local residents in resolving community problems through their Volunteer Action Movement, supporting the AKSES Program and Civil to foster the education



and employment of rural youth, and facilitate youth community engagement through the Civil Youth Project.

Albania is a small country, approximately the size of Maryland, on the Adriatic coast of the Balkan Peninsula. After the Second World War it was isolated from the rest of the world by a xenophobic, Stalinist government. For decades Albanians, mostly Muslim, experienced purges, economic hardship and underdevelopment, political and civil repression, and the total ban on religious observance.

Its long isolation contributed to Albania's status as one of the poorest nations in Europe. In 2008 its per capita income was less than \$4000 a year and the official unemployment rate was over 12%. Remittances from Albanian workers abroad make up almost 10% of the country's economy; with the recent crises with the global financial system and with the Euro, these remittances have fallen dramatically.

PASS works with the most marginalized populations of Albania, primarily rural dwellers and ethnic minorities. These are the people who suffered most under the Communist regime, were mostly ignored by the liberalization of the past two decades, and the recent decline in remittances. The rate of unemployment and lack of education among this population is very high.

With help from Pedals for Progress, PASS plans to establish a Tirana Community Bicycle program. Not only will this provide jobs for workers maintaining and managing the community bicycles, but the bikes themselves will help reduce the social and economic isolation of suburban and rural communities by providing dedicated transportation from the margins of Tirana to the center. An additional effect of the program will be to raise awareness among citizens of the bicycle as a fun, healthy, and environmentally sound method of transportation.



P4P crew on June 19, 2010 loading bikes for PASS.

## A SPECIAL THANKS TO OUR SPONSORS AND MAJOR CONTRIBUTORS

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In Rivas, Nicaragua, a parrot hangs out on the 125,000th bicycle collected by Pedals for Progress.

## PRESIDENT'S LETTER

Almost twenty years.....

This will be the final President's Message before our 20th Anniversary. These twenty years have provided so many occasions for reflection and so many memories, and P4P still has so far yet to go....

Early on I realized that the "concept" underpinning P4P—that one of the most efficient ways of helping mitigate poverty overseas is to make available cheap and easily-maintained technologies, such as bicycles and sewing machines, that allow workers to exponentially increase their productivity—was bigger than we were. It would be best to create an effective model to share so others, in other locations, could work on their own to help us carry out our mission.

In 1991 there were two bicycle recycling organizations. Today, they have proliferated across the US, Canada, Asia, and Europe; there are almost eighty in total. They pursue our mission and all pretty uniformly use our core P4P-developed business model. All of their output combined almost matches P4P's number of total of bikes shipped. This is a good thing. By sharing our model we doubled what we could achieve on our own! Our goal is not market domination—it is that poor people worldwide are given the chance to help themselves through hard work.

The upcoming anniversary gives me reason to reflect on my personal involvement with this phenomenon. I am not a cyclist, nor do I know how to sew very well. But I am concerned with reducing poverty and providing the dignity of employment. In finding a way to supply bikes and sewing machines to many people who need them, I didn't "make" anything new. What I did was help create a methodology for this and lines of information that would enable others to build on my ideas. I also removed a lot of pedals, packed a lot of bikes, and through my hard work lead by example. An individual really can make a difference.

But even so I was never alone.

The Peace Corps taught me to take what I learned in the field and act upon it for the betterment of mankind.

During my time with the Peace Corps in Ecuador my landlord, Cesar Pena, showed me what a bicycle could do. He wasn't the best carpenter in town, but he was certainly the most successful. He worked more often, and for better pay, because his bike gave him the means to travel farther, with more tools and supplies, than his competitors. His example of dedication to family and hard work was hard to ignore.

My wife, Dina, graciously allowed me to act on my dream and build this organization from nothing while we raised a family. John Alexander, my Peace Corps housemate, knew Cesar and encouraged and supported me. I began P4P working my tail off, but luckily another Peace Corps alumnus, Chad Bardone, came along. He helped me fashion the organization and many of its best operational practices. I still worked my tail off, but at least my efforts were channeled more efficiently.

But most of all, the success of P4P is the result of the efforts of thousands of individuals over the years who have bothered to care. I sincerely thank you for your trust and confidence. I couldn't have done all this without you.

Let's see together what the next twenty years will bring....

Sincerely,



Dave Schweidenback  
Founder and President  
Pedals for Progress

## 2010 Shipments:

May 1st Rivas, Nicaragua #44  
EcoBici Revolving Fund 550

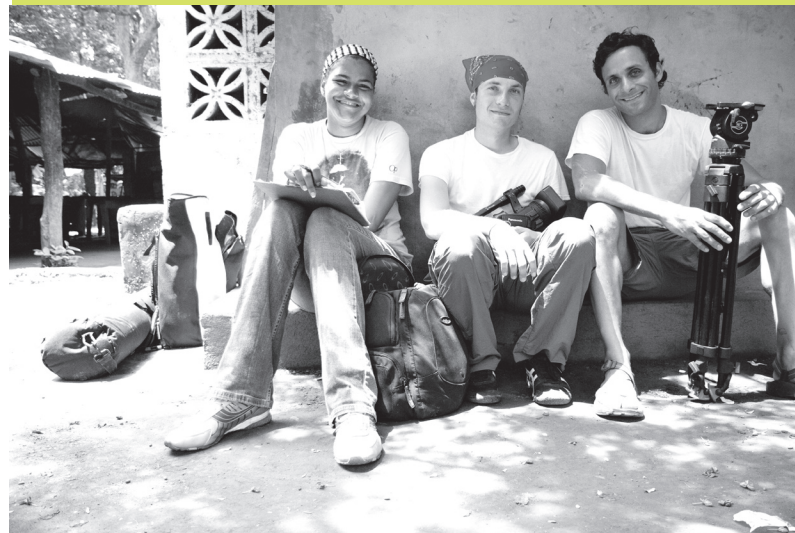
May 15th Guatemala #11  
FIDESMA Revolving Fund 580

June 5th, Tema, Ghana #10  
WeBike Revolving Fund 515

June 19th Pass/Albania #1  
Clif Bar+Soros Foundations 463

## MISSION STATEMENT

TO DELIVER ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT AID BY  
RECYCLING BICYCLES AND SEWING  
MACHINES IN THE U.S. AND SHIPPING THEM TO  
THE PEOPLE OF THE DEVELOPING WORLD



Gissel Rosario, Greg Sucharew, and Frank Trotta, from left to right, are currently shooting a film about Pedals for Progress where it all began 20 years ago, in Rivas, Nicaragua. On this day they were following Larry the Baker, the owner of the 125,000th bicycle collected by Pedals for Progress. Larry gets to work at around 4am, bakes with his coworkers, and then piles the goods onto his new bike to cart them around town, stopping at homes, shops, and at local gathering points to sell the bakery's products.



## A FRIEND IN NEED IS A FRIEND INDEED

Constantin Bandiu

Pelinia is one of the largest villages in northern Moldova, with a population of over eight thousand. The main occupation for villagers is farming, which keeps most residents busy all year round. Consult-Nord was founded in 2005, with the agreement of Pelinia's citizens, to be a voluntary, independent, self-admin-



Bikes arrive in Pelinia, Moldova.

istrated, non-political organization to undertake projects for the benefit of the population of Pelinia region as a whole. Our association's aims are to organize area youth and improve their socio-economic condition, to develop close relations with local, national, and international NGO partners, and to establish a closer partnership with the local public administration for more efficient community problem solving. We've also founded the Alliance of Community Centers of Access to Information and Training (ACCAIT), currently comprising over 100 centers across Moldova. We are able to maintain our activities through nominal fees for our services and by fundraising from external resources. By 2006 we were able to implement the "Local Economical Development" project. Its major aim is to eradicate local poverty and unemployment by growing Pelinia's economic sector and developing its infrastructure by organizing the resources of the community and its citizens. In 2008, due to a partnership with Pedals for Progress, the project was able to bring a container of bicycles from the United States. The aim of this initiative was to provide the bicycles at low cost to help Pelinians solve problems such as traveling around and outside the village efficiently, carrying heavy loads to and from their fields, etc.

One of our most exciting projects has been our modern Sewing Workshop. Besides the bicycles, Pedals for Progress sent us 15 sewing machines. Last summer, with the proceeds of selling some of the bicycles and with the help of the Peace Corps in Moldova, we implemented the Sewing Workshop in the village. We prepared a room with five of the sewing machines, one industrial sewing machine, and the necessary furniture. Girls from the village were taught to perform certain sewing operations such as design and making up prototypes because these are most

important in dressmaking. They studied the structure of fabrics, how to take measurements, and how to use the machines. Many of the graduates bought the machines at which they learned and now work at sewing garments for themselves, their families, and others.

Today's economic crisis has affected us in Moldova, too. Nevertheless, we try to overcome this difficulty using patience and imagination. We don't wait to act, we work everyday to find a way out. For instance, we have lowered the price of our bicycles to be even more affordable for those whose incomes have been reduced and need even more assistance. We've worked to place information and even photos on our web page—in this way we've expanded the assistance we are able to provide to other parts of Moldova and even into Romania.

At the end of 2009, with the money we got from selling our original shipment, we had funds enough to pay for the transportation of a new container from Pedals for Progress. We have just begun to make the bicycles available to the public, but I have promised to award two prizes for the best pupils of the year 2009-10—one pupil from the primary school and the second from the gymnasium (note: in Moldova, the primary school serves students ages 6-10, while the gymnasium serves students ages 10-15). And, of course, we are going to award the most active volunteers in our various programs.

We are thankful to Pedals for Progress and the American people for providing us the chance to solve some of our everyday problems, like helping us move more quickly through the village and its neighborhood and helping us carry heavy loads more easily. Also, I can't help mentioning the great help given by Peace Corps



The crew arrives to help unload the container.

RM Darren Enterline. He supported us greatly in implementing the Bikes for Everybody project and in opening the Sewing Workshop. Thank you all ever so much for your kindness and generosity. I wish you to be healthy and continue do such generous charity for those who really need it so much nowadays.

Dear Pedals for Progress,

I am a 15-year-old girl from Pelinia, Moldova, and trying to choose the way of my future. Frankly speaking, I was confused and didn't know where to continue my studies. But now, after attending the “Art of Sewing” courses organized in our village by Consult-Nord, I know for sure that I will be a dressmaker. These courses were of great help to me, and my friends too. First, because we teenagers from the village are not so lucky as those from the cities, we don't have the possibilities they do. Second, the courses were free.

We were satisfied here because we have learnt a lot of interesting things starting with the fabrics' structure, taking measurements, and finishing with performing certain opera-



tions in sewing. We were given knowledge about the sewing process from start to finish. I sewed myself a nice dress and after I finished the courses my parents bought me the very machine I had worked on. I hope to make my parents happy sewing for them, too.

In conclusion, on behalf of the girls who attended the courses, I want to thank you for your kindness. I greatly appreciate you helping me reach my goals.

Pripa Elena, 9th grade student

Dear Pedals for Progress,

The Milesian philosopher Thales said that one of the very difficult things for men was “to know oneself.” But I also think it's one of the most rewarding. We discover new sides of our personalities trying new things and learning new skills. These experiences help us look forward to new goals. That's why it's so important to try every opportunity to know yourself. At [Consult-Nord's] sewing center I've had the opportunity to improve my sewing skills—and I found the experience beautiful. I always wanted to be a designer and create my own clothes and I've been able to make my dream come true. I didn't need to become an expert to create clothing, I only needed the desire and inspiration of knowing how splendid it is to wear clothes you've made by yourself. But I also think the sewing center is more than simply a place to pursue an interest. It's helping to meet a real need we have nowadays. Not everyone has the chance to buy a sewing machine in order to make or repair garments, so in this case the center provides a practical solution.



These sewing classes helped me a lot in improving my skills and now I'm sewing my own garments. That's amazing, isn't it? I feel myself very lucky because I learned to sew and I am thankful to all those people who implemented this project. Thanks a lot for helping people to realize their dreams!

Dolinta Mihaela, 12th grade student



# A LETTER FROM THE HEARTLAND

Tim Weitzel

Hello to everyone from the Heartland of America—Dubuque, Iowa to be exact. Dubuque is an old river town of about 62,000 people situated on the banks of the Mississippi River. I suppose many of you would think of Iowa as flat as a pancake, but Dubuque's topography is more similar to San Francisco than the Great Plains.



Spring 2010 collection in Dubuque.

I first talked to Dave Schweidenback four years ago. In 2006, after roughly five years of “thinking about it,” I decided to try in some small way to “help someone.” My daughter, Erica, had returned from Haiti in 2002 with horrific stories of poverty and the immense transportation problems of that island. Being an avid road bicyclist, I had 3 or 4 “extra” bikes in my garage. My plan was to collect a few more and send them to a Catholic missionary in Port au Paix. I now laugh at how naïve I was. By the time I



Bikes arrive at the collection site.

looked up, I had 30 bikes in my garage with no idea what to do next. Over coffee, a good friend of mine said simply, “Why don’t you check the internet? Somebody is probably already doing

that.” And of course they were! I called a phone number at Pedals for Progress and some guy named Dave answered. We talked for a long time, and though I wasn’t sure he liked me, I needed to get rid of “my bikes.” My next problems were determining how I would get them to New Jersey and how much would I have to pay. I kind of remember Dave saying something about \$10.00 a bike, which meant something like \$300.00, plus shipping to New Jersey I soon learned the economics of philanthropy! But, like super heroes, Ding Bell, Jack Blossch, John Markham, Paul Schultz, Tim Hodge, the Dubuque Noon Optimist, the Dubuque Bike Club, and Joe Bitter burst onto the scene. Almost overnight, it seems now, I went from a one man show to a well oiled, yet still somewhat unorganized, group of dedicated bike collectors.

We still scramble for money, but things always seem to work out. We often talk and dream about how to collect more bikes or how to get them to New Jersey and beyond more efficiently. I see no turning back now. Our immediate goal is to continue to organize and plan for future collections.

When Dave asked me to write this article about Pedals for Progress presence in Dubuque, I was proud, humbled, and a bit surprised. Proud, because I really believe we have helped lift



Preparing a children's bike for shipment to P4P warehouse.

families out of poverty and made their lives a bit easier. Humbled, because I am just a small part of the Dubuque operation: much, much credit goes to the unsung volunteers, the Dubuque Noon Optimist, Dubuque Bike Club, Jack Blossch, Ding Bell, and my father, George Weitzel. Surprised, because when I started out four years ago I envisioned collecting 50 bikes at the most. We currently have collected 1663 bikes and I am constantly amazed at the community support we receive. Finally, above all, I am thankful to Dave Schweidenback for trusting someone from half a country away whom he has never met, and to all the donors who continue to bring in their bikes.

## THOUGHTS ON SHIPPING

Dave Schweidenback

One of the things I've learned over the years is that P4P can only work in partnerships that allow us to work. Sounds simple, but it's not. P4P needs a wide range of things working in conjunction to be effective overseas. While some aspects of the process are more critical than others, and some more difficult, the order of their importance is made irrelevant by the need to have every single detail working perfectly.

First, we need a country which will allow us to import bicycles. This is more difficult than you would think. Many governments don't appreciate the utility of the bicycle, and tax them at an exceedingly high rate. In addition, the political climate of many countries is such that extra-legal monetary demands are made by government officials in order to move goods. Also, there are regions to which it is simply too cost-prohibitive to ship. All of these stifle our ability to make bikes affordable to the poor.

Second, we need to have an overseas partner organization which is reliable. This means they need to possess the capacity to receive and move our bikes through local customs and then warehouse, refurbish, and market them to the end user. Just as important, if not more so, they need to be aboveboard and transparent, and send regular financial reporting back to P4P.

Last, we need the funding for the initial shipment. The way our "revolving fund" concept works, P4P donates the first shipment

of bicycles and assorted goods to the overseas

partner, which agrees to use the proceeds from the sale of those bikes to fund another shipment, and so on. But, in addition to procuring the actual contents of our shipments, we need to raise the money necessary to get them to their destinations. This is why we require a \$10 donation with every bike. It's also why we shake our beggar's bowl at corporations and other large charitable givers. It's why we ask for your help every year.



And moving a bicycle is easy compared to delivering a sewing machine. Our bicycle partners simply cannot absorb the volume of the sewing machines we collect every year, so we need to find other partners who can afford the high air freight costs or find room for them on shipping containers of their own. The logistics of this can be quite complex and difficult to coordinate, not to mention the challenge of finding partners inclined to help subsidize these expensive shipments.

But many organizations understand the benefit of these invaluable machines and are willing to make the effort. An example of this is International Relief & Development (IRD) and Georgia. As part of their total assistance package to Georgian families displaced and ruined during their country's recent conflict with Russia, IRD is shipping 82 of our sewing machines. P4P is very pleased to be of help to those families and is grateful to IRD for providing the means. Although our contribution will take up only a small portion of their container, we know the effect it will have will be enormous.

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**GEORGIA & INTERNATIONAL RELIEF  
AND DEVELOPMENT**

P4P is pleased to announce a partnership with International Relief and Development (IRD), a non-profit humanitarian and development organization that manages humanitarian assistance, community development, and conflict stabilization programs worldwide. IRD works in more than forty nations, one of which is Georgia.

Nestled in the Caucasus Mountains, Georgia is a former Soviet republic that has been attempting to remove itself from the shadow of Russia for nearly two decades. Despite political and economic aid from the West, Georgia's economy remains inextricably tied to its powerful northern neighbor. Its domestic market is miniscule and the vast majority of its imports and exports come from or are destined for Russia. This is problematic in light of intermittent, politically-motivated bans on Georgian products by the Russian government and the fact that, since its independence, Georgia's outdated Soviet industries have struggled to compete internationally. More than a quarter of the Georgian population lives below the official poverty line.



A conflict in 2008 between Georgia and Russia which hurt many Georgian families, who were forced from their homes and returned to find many of their belongings stolen or lost during the Russian occupation. IRD is working with the United Nations High Commission for Refugees to provide assistance to more than 800 of these families. As part of the IRD effort, P4P supplied 82 sewing machines, which are being made available to encourage local entrepreneurship. These machines are expected to arrive on the Georgia by mid-July.

**For more information visit [www.p4p.org](http://www.p4p.org).**



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