

# Bikes4Kids Newsletter

November/December 2017 (vol. 17.6)

This newsletter is published with the intended purpose of providing information for all volunteers, suppliers and known supporters of Bikes4Kids. To subscribe or unsubscribe please contact B4K at 763-234-4790.

## Christmas Bikes - 2017



The Bikes4Kids staff has been working very hard to satisfy the always expanding list of kids and people in need of a bicycle whether it is for recreation or transportation. In addition to filling requests B4K also gives bikes away at an annual Christmas event in December. It seems that the number continues to grow and this year over 100 bikes will be given away to needy kids. The bikes shown above will be transferred to the Anoka Armory where they will be given away as part of a benefit program sponsored by Toys For Joy. The Toys For Joy organization is made up of Real Estate sales personnel who provide toys for kids in need to age 18 in the northern suburbs. This group has been volunteering their services for 36 years. Each year they touch the lives of well over approximately 4,000 children. For more information on Toys For Joy go to their website at <https://spaar.com/community-engagement/toys-for-joy/>



In the  
Spotlight

## In the Spotlight

We are always interested in our volunteers and why they have decided to volunteer their time at Bikes4Kids.

The focus for the spotlight in this issue of the Bikes4Kids Newsletter is one of our prime bike mechanics, Bob Gambrel. Here is Bob's story in his own words:



I was attracted to Bikes4Kids for many years but did not start volunteering until after I retired from my job in late 2014. My barber and I both rode bikes and he told me about this group of (mostly) retired guys in Anoka County that repaired bikes in their spare time. He snipped out for me an article in The Star Trib which described the group. I definitely had on my list of retirement things to do to check out the group.

I started with B4K in early 2015. As I was winding down my job (I went part time for a few months) I noticed a sign for Free Bikes For Kids (FB4K) at the Allina Clinic I went to. I read more about it, and since their warehouse that year was in Fridley I

## **In the Spotlight continued...**

decided to give it a shot. 60 bikes and 2 months later I was hooked. But their program is seasonal, so I was done in December. I remembered the B4K article and decided I would try it out. With some other things to catch up with in early retirement, I decided to do an already planned vacation in the Spring, then try B4K. I have been involved with both similarly named groups ever since. As I am writing this I do B4K in Ham Lake on Mondays and Wednesdays and FB4K in New Hope on Fridays.

Prior to B4K I worked for about 45 years at Unisys as a programmer then manager of computer programmers. I was lucky enough to learn about computers in almost their infancy in 1964 and was hooked. My dad was a technical guy who fixed X-ray machines so he introduced me to electronics and photography and also taught me to ride my first bike in Brooklyn. (For Mel: I also loved stick-ball with my "Spaldeen" a block away from Flatbush Ave.) I left Brooklyn soon after the Dodgers did. My dad's job took him to Indiana and Ohio and I remember in both places hopping on my bike and taking long exploratory bike rides. I would be gone for hours seeing the sights, on bike. My job took me to Minnesota where I still like those types of rides. In the latter days of my career I took to commuting to work on bike. Usually throwing a bike on a bus and getting most of the way on bus then biking the rest of the way. Sometimes biking the whole way depending on the weather. I still look for opportunities to take exploratory trips combining bus, bike, and train. As I was getting more into commuting I got involved with an ad hoc group called "Biking in the Burbs" which was attempting to improve biking (mainly for commuters) in the northern suburbs. As I lived in Fridley I worked with the city as they wrote their comprehensive 10 year plan. I wrote most of the cycling chapter which recommended some improvements several of which actually happened. My other interests include reading, photography, computers but definitely not yard work.

What keeps me here is that I can't think of any other volunteer job that would suit me as well from a skill and interest point of view. I always worked on my own bikes as a kid and adult and I ride a bike myself. Riding is something that interested me early as a child and I have continued to like it well into my second childhood now.

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## **Yikes, 1,000 Bikes !!!!!**

The bike repair crew has been working diligently and steadily to keep up with the requests for bikes. In fact, they had been so focused on the repair process when it soon became apparent that they are getting very close to a major milestone in bike repair. The crew under the leadership of Ken Johnson may top 1,000 bikes repaired during a one-year period. As of this publication 866 bikes have been repaired for 2017. But, the focus is always on quality and if you ask any one of the mechanics they will quickly tell you that they will not sacrifice quality for quantity. We will continue with the conclusion of this story with our next publication of the Bikes4Kids Newsletter.

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## **Bikes4Kids Expands:**

As a means to accommodate the increasing demand for bikes, B4K has added an additional storage facility. This "hoop house" will keep the bikes protected from the elements and make it easier to maintain quality and track the inventory.



## Why We Do What We Do...

We get letters and responses from the large population of people that we serve. Here is another story involving our volunteer Paula who was able to save the day for a very needy young man. It starts with an e-mail from Paula to B4K:

“ Hi,

I just got a call from my cousin. He owns the Godfathers Pizza on Brooklyn Blvd in Brooklyn Park, MN. One of his employees is a 17 year old boy with some developmental challenges. His mother is a single parent who recently suffered a stroke. This young man and his sister are both working to help the family make ends meet. While he was working yesterday, his bike was stolen from the parking lot of Godfathers Pizza.

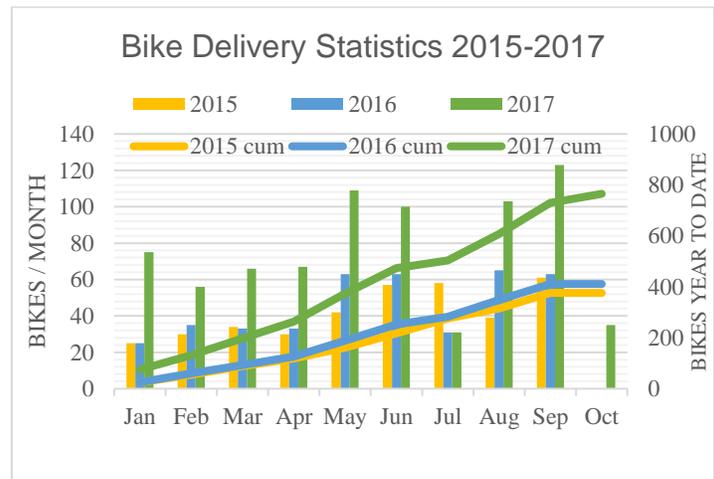
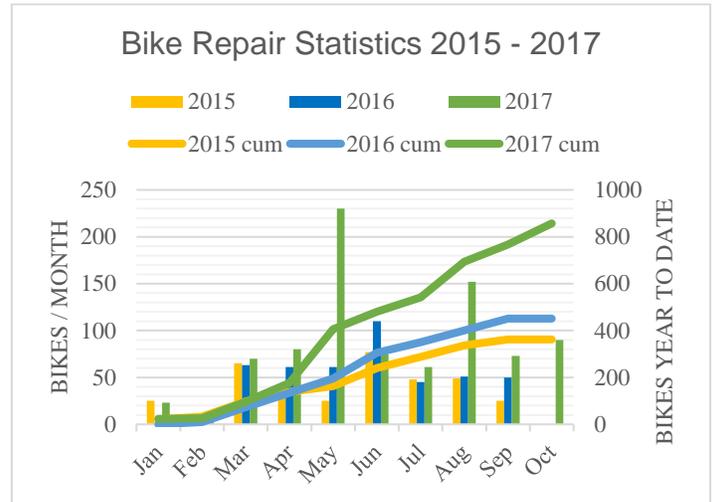
My cousin called to ask if he could buy a bike from us to replace the one that was stolen. I told him we don't sell bikes, but that I would inquire on his behalf to see if we have a bike available to donate to this young man.

Do we?

Yes we did have a bike and here is a picture of the response when Paula presented the bike to the happy recipient:



## Operations Statistics



(Note: October 2015 and 2016 were unavailable)

