

chainletter

The Bike Wise newsletter

April 2009

Cycle mad centres congratulated

Results in from the Bike Wise Mayoral Challenge reveal New Zealand has lots of 'cycle mad' cities.

New Plymouth claimed the title in the large centre category (population over 58,000) from last year's winner, Rodney District, by scoring a massive 3641 points.

Central Hawke's Bay took the mid-sized title (population over 11,000) for the second year in a row by scoring 507 points, and Opotiki has won in the small centre category (population under 11,000), also for the second year in row, with 766 points.

This was the fourth Bike Wise Mayoral Challenge and attracted more than 14,000 participants nationwide. Around 50 towns and cities competed for the title in their category, up from 35 centres in 2008.

The show of local spirit across New Zealand was heartening. The Mayoral Challenge rides have been a big success again this year, and your feedback tells us they've also been loads of fun. We're really impressed with how many people got riding to support their communities.

Events like these, that have such strong support from local leaders, businesses and local personalities, are helping more and more Kiwis discover that biking is a fun and convenient alternative to driving, especially for short trips.

The winning centres may get the official bragging rights, but everyone who took part deserves a pat on the back.

Win a prize and plan your next challenge

We have five fantastic prizes to give away this issue for cyclists who share their stories with us. You can contact us with any cycling-related tales such as: how you got into cycling, why you love it so much, what you did for Bike Wise Month or how you encouraged a friend to get back in the saddle after a long absence.

Each entry will go into the draw to win one of five books, the *Lake Taupo cycle challenge guide* by Amy Taylor, an Avanti cycle shirt and an Exelite high-visibility belt. The stories may then be shared in future issues of Chainletter.

Taylor says if you want to really enjoy the Lake Taupo ride and haven't done it before, you should start training now! She should know. Cycling New Zealand Federation's 2008 Coach of the Year, and two-time winner of the SPARC Prime Minister's Scholarship for Coaching, Taylor has coached cyclists for national and international races, and has her own Auckland-based training business. Let Amy's book inspire you to take on the Challenge!

To be in with a chance to win these fantastic prizes just email your story to bikewise@nzta.govt.nz by Friday 15 May 2009.



The start of the Franklin Mayoral Challenge



North Shore City goes by bike

Debbie Lang, Sustainable Transport Coordinator, North Shore City Council

What do strawberry jam, an Olympic gold medallist and a race to change a bike tyre have in common?

They were all part of North Shore City's Go By Bike Day breakfast. Over 3kg of strawberry jam, 400 bagels and 350 pots of yoghurt were consumed on the beautiful morning which greeted up to 500 North Shore cyclists.

Olympic gold medallist sailor Tom Ashley cycled to the breakfast with one of four police escorted rides which headed to the event from the four corners of the city. The group rides provided newer riders with a supportive environment to give cycling a go, and the opportunity for people of all ability levels to ride together to the breakfast event.



Olympic gold medallist, Tom Ashley, addresses the crowd

Cycling newbies were provided with a special resource pack to help them get started and a more experienced cyclist was on hand to answer their questions and provide advice. One new cyclist attending the breakfast was in her sixties, and had only learnt to ride a bike for the first time two days before the event, at a training session held for beginners.

All cyclists attending the breakfast were rewarded with live entertainment, free bike checks, a dare-devil unicycle stunt demo, and loads of spot prizes. Those up for the challenge strutted their stuff on stage in the 'most lycra-clad' competition while others raced to change a bike tyre.

A review of the survey results found that just over half of the participants were attending the breakfast for the first time, reflecting a city-wide increase in cycling and interest in cycling activities.



MC Jo Holley interviews the winner of the 'most lycra-clad' competition

Other results revealed that 34% of attendees were female; 64% were aged over 40; 29% of attendees normally cycle over five times a week; only 5% cycle less than once per month; 25% of attendees regularly commute to work; 10% use their bike to get to local shops; 56% cycle for recreation or fitness, and 70% of people who had attended before said that the event had encouraged them to cycle more often. And the main reason for this – seeing that there are so many other people out there doing what they are doing!

Make yourself seen

With the clocks recently going back it's important to remember that it might be darker than usual when you are cycling home.

Why not take some time to make a safety check of your family's bikes? Make sure the reflectors are intact, bike lights and brakes are working and invest in some high-visibility clothing. For more information and a safe cycling checklist go to www.landtransport.govt.nz/road-user-safety/walking-and-cycling/safety-cyclists.html

Bike Wise merchandise still available

We still have the full range of Bike Wise merchandise available for you to purchase. The low-cost range includes pens, t-shirts, slap bands, bike lights and puncture repair kits.

You might be planning an event later in the year or simply want some incentives to encourage your staff to keep fit. To download an order form, go to www.bikewise.co.nz and click on the Merchandise link on the right.

Bike Wise Battle stories

Many of the stories we hear about the Bike Wise Battle are incredibly inspiring so we wanted to share some from organisations/people who took part. The next four articles demonstrate how participation can be encouraged by sheer enthusiasm and creative ideas! The Bike Wise team congratulates all the organisations who took part.

REIGNING CHAMPIONS SHARE THEIR STORY

Helen Fitt, Researcher, Landcare Research

We were delighted to win the 500+ organisation category in the Bike Wise Battle this year. We have been working towards this for a number of years now. Each year we manage to get more staff on bikes and more people interested in helping to coordinate special activities and cycling promotions.

We're really happy with the way staff got involved. But just because we won this year it doesn't mean we're stopping here. We'll be back next year, hopefully bigger and better again!

Nine of our departments competed in the Battle, from our tiny Wellington office with three staff (the first Landcare department to reach 100% participation!) to the head office in Lincoln with over 250 potential bikers.

We started Bike Wise Month with a celebrity ride around the Lincoln campus with our CEO, Warren Parker, and other members of the senior management team leading the way. This was followed up through the month with special activities across the company including the 'learn to ride a recumbent' day (Hamilton), the 'bike to ice cream' ride (Dunedin), and the 'fix a puncture without getting your hands dirty' workshop (Lincoln).



A welcome break at the end of Little River Rail Trail ride

NEWBIES ENGAGE WITH THE BATTLE

Lynne Osborne, Senior Human Resources Advisor, The O'Brien Group

Our staff loved the Bike Wise Battle! It was The O'Brien Group's first time participating and as a nationwide company we kept momentum going with staff updates and inter-site competition. At least three staff members have purchased bikes as a result of Bike Wise Month.

We held an event for our Mosgiel Factory and Cycle Surgery Middlemarch who very generously gave us free hire of a tandem for the day. As a result we got 93% participation from our Mosgiel staff. Our production supervisors (Jason, Allan and Paul) made sure everyone was kitted out in the correct safety gear to have a go, including staff member Lindsay Varcoe, who hadn't been on a bike for 44 years until the Battle!

We believe we might have had the oldest rider (67 years) so clearly age isn't a barrier. We also achieved 100% female participation so neither is gender.

The O'Brien Group ended up in fourth place overall (in the 100-499 staff bracket) and we were stoked!

Most of these events were a great success – but the key thing for us was getting the staff to support and encourage each other. When we see staff out and about talking about cycling and egging each other on, that's where we see the real gains in participation among those who wouldn't normally cycle.

We're particularly proud of our Auckland site this year. For the first three weeks of the battle they were on target to match last year's total of 26% participation. Then a few key people (who everyone knows) started persuading others to get out and have a go and suddenly there was a rush of biking and participation shot up to 70%. There are loads of people (not necessarily senior managers or keen cyclists) who can make a real difference to initiatives like this – and most of the time we have no idea what they can do until they just start doing it.

Our Lincoln site held a 'cyclist of the week' competition for each of the four weeks of the Battle to reward those who did something special. Nominees included someone who delivered organic veg by bike, a volunteer firefighter who regularly dashes off to the fire station on his bike when the siren sounds, and numerous people who hadn't been on bikes for years (and had to dig their bikes out of sheds and garages to participate). There was also someone who rode 200 km to a conference, several employees on a supported employment programme for individuals with disabilities, and someone who helped a tired colleague all the way home (many kilometres past his own house) on a particularly windy day. They are all incredibly inspiring.

Our cycling initiatives won't stop with the end of the Battle but they lessen in intensity a little. Everyone would hate me if I went on about cycling quite that much for any longer! The work to keep on making it easier to get on a bike – from providing bike sheds and site bikes, to bikers breakfasts, notifications of local authority cycling strategies and submission opportunities, and through to just helping promote a culture of cycling – this goes on even in the middle of winter when it's belting down with hail, blowing a howling southerly and all normal people are safely inside in the warm!



Business Manager, Michael Burwood and National Sales and Marketing Manager, Matt Baker



Best dressed biker – Blair Stewart

TAIRAWHITI DISTRICT HEALTH SET THE PACE

Sonia Gamblen, Associate Director of Nursing, Tairāwhiti District Health

We did lots of things for the month to engage staff including having a cyclometer in the main entrance to show how well we were doing. I set a target for 20% of employees to get on their bikes and participate. Every day I sent out a staff email with cycling facts and sometimes trivia – this was very well received, so much so that some people were sorry when the month was over and the emails stopped!

We had a calendar of events for the month including some Wednesday evening cycles on the seafront, a winery tour on bikes, a huge 188 kilometre cycle over two days between Gisborne and Whakatane, spot prizes for cycling to work and a couple of Friday evening cycles. In the last week of the Bike Wise Battle a local cycle shop (Main Trax) loaned the hospital four bicycles so staff could ride around the grounds on their lunch and tea breaks thereby getting their mandatory 2km on a bike.

Many people had not cycled since school days and after the initial 'I can't believe I'm doing this', really enjoyed themselves. I heard fascinating conversations of people buying bikes for the occasion, stories of very sore areas, meetings held on bikes and family events. Though it was incredibly hard work it was a great month.

We also did a Go By Bike Day breakfast on the 18th that was kindly supported by Sport Gisborne and we had lots of staff, children from nearby schools and other cyclists join in. We started at 6am to get the early shift workers!



The ride to Whakatane

BIKING WITH THE WHOLE FAMILY

Felicity Masters, Senior Business Support Officer, NZ Transport Agency

Despite being heavily pregnant, dedicated cyclist Kim Veale wasn't going to let her expanding tummy get in the way of her participating in the Bike Wise Battle for the NZ Transport Agency during February.

Kim started cycling in 2004 to increase her fitness and found she really enjoyed it. As her two girls Caylah and Meghan got older, her reasons for cycling have changed.

'My girls really enjoy biking too and it's awesome getting out as a family. Whenever I bike to work, they bike to school. They even like biking across town to go the library or shops, even in the rain!' she says.

Kim believes that biking in the early and middle stages of pregnancy is not difficult at all. She even found the morning bike to work helped with her morning sickness.

'It's also a great way to stay fit for labour.'

The incentives from the Bike Wise Battle and the encouragement her two girls gave her really made Kim push it just that little bit more to stay on the bike throughout February. At 37 weeks pregnant, her big baby tummy got in the way, making it too uncomfortable to stay on the bike.

Kim advises anyone who is pregnant and considering biking to start out slow, take their time, and listen to their body and baby.

'To those who think they can't, just give it a go - an honest go - and you will be surprised at how much fun it is and how good it is for your body.'



Staff just 'doing it' on their breaks

