



DARTMOUTH THE WESTPORT CHRONICLE

VOL. XXXIV, NO. 7

WEDNESDAY, FEBRUARY 23, 2011

FIFTY CENTS

Westport coach 'teaches' cycling on the side

By **CHRISTINA STYAN**
Special Writer

WESTPORT — When not busy on the parquet floor of a basketball court, Westport High School freshman basketball coach Logan McNamara spends his afternoons teaching underprivileged youngsters bicycle skills as part of the "Trips for Kids" New Bedford (TFK) program.

"I teach them the principles of bicycling, including maintenance, and the joys of cycling around the area," the coach remarked.

McNamara also wears the hat of a special needs teacher's aide at the Dartmouth Middle School, where he learned about the TFK program from other teachers.

An amateur cyclist who enjoys biking through Westport and Dartmouth, McNamara started TFK New Bedford last summer with TFK Executive Director and co-founder JoAnn Tschaen, vice president of Our Sisters' School.

Instructors and young people ride bikes from the central base at the Victory Park Warming House, located in New Bedford's South End.

Mr. McNamara has biked with the youngsters on trips to the beach. Other destinations included city parks, libraries, and beaches, the Whaling Museum, the National Historical Park, and Fort Taber— places that provided safe, fun, and educational experiences.

"One boy became really interested in the mechanics of the bicycle, and asked about starting a shop program. This winter, we began a seven-week pilot program covering the maintenance part of cycling," he explained.

An avid hiker, cyclist and cross country skier, Ms. Tschaen is funding the program through grants. Youngsters are coming from the Our Sisters' School and the Boys and Girls Club.

TFK New Bedford is a chapter of Trips for Kids National, which donated five mountain bikes to the local program.

"We use local bicycle trips to create the opportunity for kids ages 10 to 16 to interact with good role models," Ms. Tschaen added. Afterwards, youngsters kept coming back on their bikes, asking for instructions on how to keep their bikes in good working order, she said.

Because TFK youth were interested in



PHOTO BY CHRISTINA STYAN/The Chronicle

THE CHALLENGE: Jacob Wilson, one of the boys taking part in the New Bedford Trips for Kids program, works on a repair bike in the shop.

learning about the maintenance of their bikes, Mr. McNamara attended training at a Southcoast cycling center, where he gained the experience necessary to train the class.

"We learned to take the bikes apart and

See **CYCLING: A4**

CONTINUED FROM A1

put back them together," proudly explained young TFK member Jacob Wilson.

Vocabulary is an important part of knowing how to take care of a bike. "With all the different part names, I made the learning kind of competitive, asking the boys to remember as many names as possible," commented Mr. McNamara.

As a coach with a sometimes-conflicting basketball practice schedule, Mr. McNamara's brother Dylan sometimes substitutes for him and conducts the classes.

Together, they have taught the group how to take their bikes apart, and fix simple problems. "They took apart the hubs and regreased all the ball bearings," he remarked during a recent visit.

On Feb. 18, the last day of class, several boys raced into the Warming House early to learn a few last-minute maintenance tips. As a special treat, Dylan recapped his best cycling trip, a ride from Somerville, Mass. to Michigan. The boys were excited to have first-hand information about the trip, his training, and his experiences on the road.

He got the idea from Dartmouth native Sarah McBratney, who also biked cross country, for Habitat for Humanity. "I trained by biking through Westport and biking from Somerville, where I lived, to where I worked. I left in mid-September, and biked to Michigan— over 1,000 miles," Dylan explained.

The key, he said, is staying hydrated. "Water is pretty crucial; by the third day, I had to drink over a gallon" a day, he noted.

Now, in a corner of the Warming House, the hybrid mountain bikes are lined up next to each other, waiting for the better weather, and the start of another summer program.

The boys felt the TFK maintenance classes were awesome, and so much fun.

"Some of the boys said 'I am going home to fix up my (own) bike; it has been lying around in the basement.' It is really cool for underprivileged children to have these experiences and to get them involved in something they like," commented Mr. McNamara.

For the volunteers, that's part of what makes it all worthwhile.



PHOTO BY CHRISTINA STYAN/The Chronicle

THE BIKE BOYS: The boys from Trips for Kids, with instructor Dylan McNamara. (L-R) Collin Silva, Jacob Wilson, Kai Todd and David Figueroa.