



New bikes {and surprises} all around

by Christine Pratt | [Jan. 25, 2010, 10:13 a.m.](#) | [Comment](#)
Wenatchee, Cashmere, East Wenatchee, Leavenworth



World photo/Kathryn Stevens

Arne Weinman, left, of the Spokane Lilac Association, and Shirley Wittgow, an Applarian for the Washington State Apple Blossom Festival, put together a bike as a team-building exercise during an annual meeting for volunteers of the Northwest Festival Hosting Association Saturday.

VIDEO



Bike Giveaway

LEAVENWORTH — If the Northwest's community festivals seem a little more super-charged with enthusiasm this year, it may have something to do with 14 kids, 14 new bikes and a region-wide exercise in team building.

"C'mon, c'mon" Linda Haglund coaxed as she twisted a black hex nut onto the axle of a lime-green, motocross-style bicycle.

Haglund, representing the Washington State Apple Blossom Festival, and her teammates from festivals in Spokane and Marysville, worked to assemble the bike.

They were four of 65 organizers of festivals from all over the region who gathered at the Best Western Icicle Inn for the annual meeting of their umbrella organization, the Northwest Festival Hosting Association.

"These bicycles are exactly like your festivals," master of ceremonies James Carter said, referring to all the "pieces" that

organizers bring together to make their festivals successful, year after year.

Bike assembly was a team-building exercise, they thought, screwdrivers and bicycle parts slipping out of their hands and clattering onto their work tables.

It would help them work better together with their own festival teams, they thought, as concentration — and some confusion — shadowed their faces as they glanced from instruction book to bike.

“OK!” Haglund said, tightening a screw on the handlebars and throwing her arms into the air in victory.

“Wait, something’s not right,” her Applarian teammate Shirley Wittgow said.

Arne Weinman of the Spokane Lilac Festival grasped the handlebar and spun it 360 degrees. The front wheel didn’t move. A bad thing.

The screws were loose and the handlebars on backward.

Disassemble. Reassemble.

Carol Kapua of the Marysville Strawberry Festival gave the screwdriver a few twists and the bike was about ready to go. She sat down on it and took a breather. The other 13 teams were also finished.

Then came the surprise.

Each newly assembled bike would be given to a child, and the children — all 14 of them — were waiting outside.

The “ahhhhs” had barely subsided when the kids streamed in with their escorts, each heading straight to an awaiting bike.

Megan Carlson, 7, of Leavenworth walked shyly up to the lime green bike as the team embraced her with smiles and joyful tears.

Megan smiled. She moved to Leavenworth after her dad, Dave Carlson, lost his job of 15 years at a Southern California factory that manufactured roof trusses.

Dave Carlson said the family fell behind on their mortgage payments and lost their home.

His mom, a Leavenworth resident and teacher for Eastmont School District, said the family could remodel and live in her basement.

They did. But all their belongings are still in storage in California.

Amy Snow, a volunteer for Peshastin-Dryden Elementary School, said she worked with Cascade School District principals and staff to choose 14 area kids who didn’t have bikes.

She was one of the few people present Saturday who was in on the surprise.

Charlotte Ley, co-organizer of this year’s event, said the bike build was the idea of Colin Brine, a local contractor for the Reno, Nev.-based leadership-counseling firm Repario.

Brine suggested the bike build would be a hands-on activity to bring the group together and give back to the community.

Repario donated its time and personnel for the event.

Bicycle-maker Specialized donated about half the bikes. Leavenworth shop Der Sportsman provided the remaining bikes at below cost. Nearly a dozen local individuals and businesses chipped in for the rest. The kids also got helmets, bike locks and backpacks.

“I’ve heard nothing but ‘Awesome!’ ” Ley said, after participants made a “human tunnel” for all the kids to run through. “Everyone had tears in their eyes ... and that’s kind of why we do the festivals.”

Jonathan Herrera, 7, of Peshastin, swayed back and forth on his new bike as if he were about to take off like a rocket.

He said he’ll do wheelies on its front and back tires. How did he feel when he learned he was getting a new bike?

“Happy” he said in English, then Spanish.

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