



Every Butt on a Bike

Media Information 8 February 2012 QBP

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MEDIA RELEASE

QBP Mechanic Institute Teaches the Fine Art of Wrenching

QBP announced the first graduating class of its new QBP Mechanic Institute (QMI). Over the course of five weeks, 16 QBP employees from across the company participated in a 40-hour bicycle mechanics-training program. The participants, who knew little or nothing about bike maintenance and repair, learned everything from flat-tire repair to derailleur system adjustment and headset overhaul. QBP launched the class as part of its commitment to invest in employees and advance the cause of bicycle advocacy. Park Tool donated copies of its *Big Blue Book of Bicycle Repair* for each student.

“At QBP we have many great employees who are passionate about bikes, but do not have a background in bike mechanics,” said Kate Kowalsky, QBP HR manager and QMI co-founder. “Providing them this training allows them to grow in their personal and professional development, and opens opportunities for them to move into roles at QBP that they would otherwise not be eligible for.”

According to Seth Nesselhuf, director of the company’s advocacy-oriented ACE program, the course—which was led by five seasoned mechanics from various departments—was designed to take the intimidation factor out of bicycle mechanics. “Participants leave this class with the confidence to work on their own bikes, their family’s bikes, and the bikes of their friends and neighbors. And when you have the confidence to fix a bike, you’re more likely to ride it to work.”

Gretchen Graham, QBP purchasing supervisor and recent QMI graduate, is a case in point. “Before I came to work here a year ago, people would ask me what kind of bike I had,” said Graham. “I’d tell them it’s silver,” she laughed. “I wanted to know more, but I’d never been in such an encouraging and supportive environment before. QMI gave me an incredible opportunity.”

After a crash course in bike anatomy, Graham and her classmates dirtied their hands on basics like tire and tube repair before taking on more complex tasks, including hub and derailleur adjustments, and crankset and headset installations. They also learned the art of wheel truing, studied brakes and internal gear systems and more. For the fifth and final session, the QMI grads volunteered for a day at Sibley Bike Depot, a non-profit community bike shop in St. Paul.

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“I can look at a bike now and understand how it works, and why its design is so specific to its purpose and its brand,” Graham said. “Before taking this course, I thought about bikes as a mode of transportation. Now I see all the creativity and passion that goes into them.” Graham, who bought a Civia Hyland last year and commuted one or two days a week during the summer months, is committed to boosting her mileage this season. Inspired by the community service model she experienced at Sibley, she plans to volunteer there regularly this year.

“QMI was a great success on every level,” said Nesselhuf. “Over five short weeks these men and women transformed from complete beginners to novice wrenchers. It’s a great foundation for them to build their skills and careers upon.”

QBP plans to offer another QBP Mechanic Institute in January 2013.

About QBP

QBP is a leading distributor to the cycling and outdoor industries. Dedicated to high performance and outstanding results, the company is committed to being in the top 1% of all distributors. Carrying more than 36,000 products from 450 vendors, the company offers domestic and international retailers a wide array of products and services including a 1,700-page catalog; an online ordering system; a renowned custom-wheel service; a specialty bike-building program and more. The company owns five bike brands including All-City, Civia, Foundry, Salsa Cycles, and Surly. QBP is also the exclusive U.S. distributor of Ridley, a Belgian manufacturer of road, mountain and cyclocross bikes, and Lazer Helmets. Additionally, QBP owns 45 North, Whisky Parts Co., Dimension, and Problem Solvers. Through its Q-Outdoor division, QBP distributes products to independent ski, run and outdoor retailers. A strong proponent of environmental business practices, QBP operates a LEED-certified, Gold-level distribution center and office complex in Bloomington, Minnesota and has applied for LEED-certified, Platinum-level certification for its complex in Ogden, Utah. A third warehouse in Middletown, PA completes the distribution triangle, allowing QBP to reach 95% of its customers by ground shipping in one to two days. For more information, please contact Jason Gaikowski, director of sales and marketing at 952-941-9391, ext. 1533 or visit: www.qbp.com.

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