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Fred Boykin Receives QBP Clay Mankin Award

Visionary Georgia Bike Retailer Recognized for Advocacy Efforts

BLOOMINGTON, MN – March. 21, 2007 – Fred Boykin, owner of Bicycle South in Decatur, Georgia, has been selected to receive the 2007 Clay Mankin Award. QBP presents the annual honor to a bicycle retailer who makes significant contributions to advance the bicycle industry. In recognition of his advocacy efforts in Decatur and the state of Georgia, Boykin received \$1,000. He plans to use the money to help sustain a bicycle safety education program for all 4th graders in the Decatur school system.

QBP created the Clay Mankin Award last year in memory of Clay Mankin, an influential San Francisco bicycle retailer and advocate who died in late 2005. Boykin is the first recipient of the honor.

“Fred practices what Clay Mankin did,” said Gary Sjoquist, QBP bicycle industry advocate. “The example he sets benefits and inspires others in our industry. Like Clay, Fred believes in getting out of his store and involved in the community—whether it’s the local business community in Decatur or the larger community of our industry. He has been instrumental in helping Georgia retailers understand the value of political activity. This shows leadership, which our industry very much needs.”

Boykin, who serves as a Decatur City Commissioner, helped procure \$ \$400,000.00 in state funds to launch a Safe Routes to School (SRTS) pilot project in metro Atlanta. The national SRTS initiative encourages ways for children to safely walk and bicycle to school through engineering, education, encouragement, and enforcement activities. Decatur’s SRTS program serves as a model for the entire state. In fact, Boykin's project director is writing a state handbook to help other Georgia communities establish their own SRTS programs. Boykin is also a founding member of the North Georgia Bicycle Dealers Association and is a board member of Georgia Bikes!, an organization working to improve conditions for cycling in the state.

While Boykin is pleased his efforts benefit the bike industry, he is very concerned about the health of a far more vulnerable population—children.

“These days, kids sit in front of screens playing video games instead of getting outside on bikes,” he said. “That means a lot more than slumping bike sales: the long-term health of a whole generation is at stake.” Boykin notes dire warnings from the National Centers for Disease Control about the dramatic increase of diabetes, high blood pressure and heart disease in children.

For the bike industry, these sedentary stats translate into sluggish sales. While high-end bikes continue to sell briskly for riders in their 30s and 40s, sales of bikes for children and teens are precipitously declining in the United States. An annual survey from the National Sporting Goods Association reports the number of children and teens regularly cycling fell more than 23 percent between 1995 and 2005.

“You can’t ride forever,” Boykin observed. “One day these older riders are going to slow down. If we don’t get kids on bikes, our industry will be chasing a smaller and smaller group of riders.”

Taking his special brand of activism directly to children, Boykin is helping his local school board incorporate Safe Routes to School into the fitness portion of their health and wellness initiatives. And because many life-long cyclists log their first miles riding alongside Mom and Dad, his SRTS project launched a Parents & Kids bike safety course to educate and encourage families to cycle together. He also introduced a Basic Bike Mechanics course for 4th and 5th graders in the Decatur school system. Apart from instilling self-reliance and a love of cycling, he hopes some of these youngsters will work in his store some day.

“We’re forming long-term relationships with these kids,” he said. “This is about building a new community of cyclists.”

By creating safer places for children to bike and walk, SRTS opens opportunities for adults, too. Boykin says the initiative fits within his broader ambition to make Decatur a greener city - friendlier to pedestrians and cyclists.

“We want to turn Decatur into an Active Living Community,” he said. “Our goal is to create a town with more room for residents, not cars.”

And Decatur is banking on a lot more residents in the near future—many of them elderly. As the first wave of Baby Boomers begins leaving the work force, legions are choosing Sun Belt communities like Decatur as retirement destinations. Boykin says because people are enjoying longer, more active lives, they will favor areas offering ample opportunities for recreation and exercise.

“At a certain age you stop cycling unless you feel safe and secure,” Boykin said. “A community that is sensitive to the safety and needs of children also works well for the elderly. Many of them don’t want to drive—or won’t be able to eventually. They’ll need a community that works on a pedestrian scale.”

Ultimately, Boykin sees his efforts on behalf of bicycling as part of a much larger movement to build environmentally sustainable and livable communities through alternative transportation.

“Transportation is about moving people, not cars,” he observes. “If you build an infrastructure that promotes a healthier, active lifestyle you’ll build a thriving community. It’s as simple as that.”

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