

South Salem Cycleworks Soon to Take Its' Final Ride



The closing of South Salem Cycleworks marks the end of a 28-year era to promote bicycling, outdoor activities, pedestrian and bicyclist rights and environmental protection.

At the end of May, owner Michael Wolfe is closing the shop, which has offered bicycles, trailers, bike parts, accessories and clothes for sale and cross-country skis and snowshoes for rent.

It's his turn to take the adventures he was always gifting to his customers.

"I loved people coming from out of state and giving them directions to ride McKenzie Pass or Columbia Gorge or Crater Lake," Wolfe said. "It was absolutely wonderful to have that experience—to give people a bike and say 'Don't drive, you will miss everything.'"

Those same people would return to the shop and tell Wolfe of their adventures—thanking him for his directions and recommendations.

"I've been sitting here for 28 years listening to people tell tales of their travels; it's time for me to travel and tell tales afterwards," he said.

Not only is running a bike shop a six- or seven-day a week job, but Wolfe spent last

summer recovering from non-Hodgkin's lymphoma. It was his second go-round with cancer.

"It wasn't supposed to be cured," he said. "If I want to get out and do things, I need to get out now."

He plans to bicycle tour the Canadian Gulf Islands—on his bucket list for decades. What he leaves behind is an impressive list of how to run a green business devoted to treading lightly on the earth.

Wolfe made sustainability a priority in everything from the way he ran his shop to his personal lifestyle to his professional dedication to promote bicyclist and pedestrian rights.

South Salem Cycleworks did not have dumpster service its entire time in business. An extensive recycling program and a creative reuse system meant that Wolfe only took a small amount of garbage to the transfer station once or twice a year.

Even hard-to-recycle items were saved at South Salem Cycleworks.

Take inner tubes, for example. There isn't a consistent recycling market for inner tubes, and even though small leaks can be fixed, most bike shops just replace the entire inner tube for a new one. But South Salem Cycle-

works fixed inner tubes to reuse them, saved other broken inner tubes in boxes for future recycling and encouraged people to upcycle tubes as strapping material or bungee cords.

The new months-old restrictions on recycling that came about due to regulations from China made it hard for Wolfe to recycle as much as he had in the past, but his shop's impact was still impressively small.

Wolfe made it a priority to fix old bikes.

"We refurbished old bikes using as many used components as possible to make an affordable, safe and reliable means of transportation for those unable or uninterested in investing in a new bike," said Wolfe. "This saves our natural resources used in the production of new bikes, the energy cost of delivering them and the maintenance of pavement in supplying them."

Employees at the shop promoted a healthy, eco-friendly lifestyle by living it themselves. Wolfe and most of his employees biked or walked to work regularly. They participated in the statewide Bicycle Commute Challenge sponsored by the Bicycle Transportation Alliance. Wolfe served on the Oregon Bicycle and Pedestrian Advisory Committee to the Department of Transportation for twelve years. A Life Member of the League of Amer-

ican Bicyclists, he has served as president, vice-president and editor for the local Salem Bicycle Club.

South Salem Cycleworks was EarthWISE certified in 2014 and earned the 2015 Mid-Willamette Valley Green Awards as Business Recycler of the Year. The EarthWISE program is a free business environmental assistance program of Marion County. EarthWISE staff helps businesses recycle, save energy, reduce waste and much more. To earn certification, a business meets criteria in six areas. There are more than 170 EarthWISE businesses and organizations in Marion County.

Even though the physical shop will be closed, some items will continue to be available via the shop's gallery on the Website sscycleworks.com. Before the shop closes, some of the inventory, including some refurbished bikes, will be sold at 25 percent to 50 percent off. Some used bikes that have not been refurbished are selling for as little as \$100.

For more information about the EarthWISE program, visit www.mcEarthWISE.net or call Alan Pennington at 503-365-3188.