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2018 Florida Bicycle Association Annual Awards

Congratulations to all of our dedicated Award recipients!

Club of the Year

Sarasota-Manatee Bicycle Club

Off Road Promoter of the Year

Kearns Hiett

Tallahassee Mountain Bike Association

Law Enforcement Agency

Chief Kevin Riley

Town of Kenneth City Police Department

Educator

Lucy Gonzalez Barr

USF Safe Routes to School CUTR, Tampa

Supporting Agency

Whit Blanton

Forward Pinellas, Clearwater

Program

Libertad Acosta-Anderson

Mobility Week

Florida Department of Transportation
District 5

Bicycle Professional

Darlene Culpepper

City of Venice, Bicycle Pedestrian
Coordinator

Citizen Bike Advocate

Mark Schiefer

Gulf Coast Velo

Citizen Bike Advocate

Ray Booth

Suncoast Cycling Club

Bicycle Business

Mark Trudeau

Fit & Fuel Café, Naples

Bicycle Friendly Community

The Villages

Trails Promoter

Kraig McLane



Elected Official Champion

Peter O'Flinn

Bonita Springs Council/Deputy Mayor

Elected Official Champion

Commissioner Kathryn Starkey

Pasco County Commissioner

District 3, New Port Richey

Volunteer

Laura Aaron

Bike Walk Indian River County, Inc.

Special Recognition

Conan Bickford

Lake Highland Preparatory School
Orlando

Special Recognition

Michelle Avola

Naples Pathways Coalition

Special Recognition

Betsy Holl

Florida Bicycle Association

**Alert Today Alive Tomorrow
& Florida Bicycle Association
encourages everyone
to celebrate!**



Visit www.floridabicycle.org
for bicycle events and activities
throughout March.

Visit
www.AlertTodayFlorida.com
for more on Florida's
Bicycle Safety Initiative

Discover the many health
benefits of one of life's simple
pleasures.

Ride a bicycle!

Visit floridabicycle.org/annual-awards for more annual award program
information and 2018 recipients. 2019 nominations will open in October!

The Bicycle & Autism: A Common Denominator of Our Society

by Minerva Santiago

Two hundred years later and despite the countless advances in society, agriculture and technology, the bicycle not only still exists, it thrives as a staple part of our humanity. What makes an invention so sustainable and resilient throughout the ages? It's simplicity. The bicycle's simple design and predictable mechanics not only make it accessible to many, but more importantly, inclusive for all!

Meet Derek, a young bicycle mechanic and entrepreneur, whose love and affinity for simple things in life, accentuates his love for the bicycle. Many have and still struggle to envision Derek as a capable bicycle mechanic/entrepreneur because of his autism and limited verbal communication. But his love for bicycles has helped him not only overshadow his limitations with his abilities, but also educate the community that surrounds him that limitations do not equate to incapacities.

Derek launched his own small business, Bike Dr. Derek, last year as a platform to create his own meaningful future of purposeful employment. What started off as a basic affinity for bicycles has evolved into a unique business, a community of friends and business partners, as well as a promising future.

Why bicycles you may ask? Well, let's start with some common themes with autism such as an attraction to spinning, repetitive movements and simplicity. It is

no secret that individuals with autism all around the world gravitate towards items that spin and movement experiences that are repetitive and predictable. Sound like a bicycle to you?

One friend of Derek's is Dr. Stephen Shore, an adult with autism who says that his love for bicycles was based on the simple design and how he could easily pull it apart and put it back together. Dr. Shore's parents once battled to keep him from being institutionalized, and they did so by allowing him to be led by his interests. His fascination with bicycles led to his first business out of his college dorm room that largely paid for his own tuition.

Bicycles are in many respects a "common-denominator" in our society. No pretense is needed nor felt when perched upon a beach cruiser or mountain bike. There is no distinction between the millionaires or the impoverished, and no difference between the young and the old. Upon the seat of a bicycle, the rider is simply a person enjoying the careful balancing act of the ride. Nothing more, nothing less.

Additionally, bicycles are not only the most portable means of transportation, it also happens to be a highly portable business. Virtually in every corner, every community, on every mountain or trail, there are bicycles that need cleaning, tune-ups and sometimes outright replacements.

Hence, becoming a bicycle mechanic not only allows Derek to have meaningful work, but also allows him to thrive in his career no matter where his life takes him. The business already plugs him into his neighborhood and in return, opens his world to the broader community.

Derek has been sharpening his skills as a bike mechanic with an entire team behind him and a wonderful teacher in front of him.

Jeff Torkelson, founder of the Recyclable Bicycle Exchange (RBX Foundation), began working with Derek almost two years ago and to this day continues to help Derek work on his Bike Dr. Derek clients weekly at the RBX shop in downtown Fort Lauderdale.

The name of Jeff's organization has certainly become very symbolic throughout this experience. Much more than bicycles are exchanged as a result of this mentor/mentee relationship. Jeff, having never worked with an individual with autism with limited verbal communication, has no doubt gained much from his many

exchanges with Derek. All of the many other individuals who cross paths with Derek through his business, likewise, gain needed insight into the abilities beyond autism, and such exchanges will no doubt turn a page for the many other individuals with autism seeking meaningful employment.

Derek, now a young bicycle mechanic and entrepreneur, exchanges business cards, exchanges ideas and most importantly, exchanges life stories with so many he comes to meet in the bicycling community and beyond. Truly, the bicycle exchange has taken on far more meaning, with far greater impacts than we could have ever imagined.



Boaz & Minerva Santiago (Derek's step-dad & mom) are founders of PicEin Works. As parents to two children with autism, they knew that traditional employment is not the right fit for all individuals with developmental disabilities. Their focus has always been to provide awareness, information, and tools to show that self-employment is a viable option for all and that individuals with developmental disabilities should have the opportunity to pursue meaningful employment, just like the rest of us. As result their son Derek now owns and operates Bike Dr. Derek with the help of an amazing cast of supportive community members.



ARE YOUR Wheels Turning?

If so, spin down to Central Florida's Polk County – your hub for some of the best and most diverse cycling experiences in Florida. Road, mountain, single track, rails-to-trails, bikepacking – with some surprisingly heart-thumping elevation changes.

Why not stay here and ride them all?
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