Peddling kindness and a healthy lifestyle

Eric Hempell is the director of a newly opened community bike shop in the Ottawa suburb of Nepean called Recyclore. The unique thing about the bike shop; it is run entirely by volunteers. The volunteers at Recyclore work to bring cycling into everyone's reach and to help the environment by recycling old bikes.

As a child, Eric Hempell loved working on his bike with the help of his older brother.

Today, as an avid cyclist, Eric has carried his childhood passion to a whole new level as the director of a brand new community bike shop in the Ottawa suburb of Nepean, called Recyclore Bicycle Recycling. Unlike most businesses, the shop is run entirely by volunteers.

"The volunteers at Recyclore simply want to bring cycling into everyone's reach and give people access to improving their lives through cycling," says Eric, who works as a Laboratory Environment Technician for Real Property Branch. "We also work to help the environment by re-using old bikes and bike parts and by promoting cycling as an alternative to driving," he adds.

The shop sells inexpensive used bicycles and also has a do-it-yourself repair shop and a bicycle-recycling depot.

"As I get older and my kids move out, I've been wondering what to do with my spare time," says Eric. "I really love cycling and I am a technician, so when the opportunity came to open this place, I took it."

It all started when the original store in downtown Ottawa was looking for a new location. "I suggested a warehouse out in the suburbs, but they said it was too far out," explains Eric. "I asked if I could copy their idea and open up our own place out here in Nepean and the rest is history."

As director, Eric puts a lot of time into the bike shop, especially during the summer. “We’re open for 15 hours on weekends and I work most of those hours, not to mention the administrative material that I do on a daily basis.”

Eric says that the driving force behind his volunteer work is helping people and improving their lives. To illustrate his point, he describes how the store recently donated 16 bikes to a First Nation’s women and children shelter.

Despite the heavy workload, Eric has no plans of losing steam. “This was only our first year of operation. We started in April and will be closing in September for the winter.”

When the store reopens next spring, he hopes it will grow into a year-round business.

Besides Recyclore, Eric has also volunteered with cancer camps, scouting, and the United Way. “It runs in the family. My mom volunteered a lot as well, so I have always been around it.”