

NEWS

Bike-recycling shop spins the wheels of hope

'Social business' offers training to disadvantaged people

By Ignatius Kabagambe

Cycle Salvation is a bike-recycling shop with a mission. It caters to people with mental and physical disabilities, as well as those with credit problems, addictions or other personal problems.

The shop, located at 477 Bronson Avenue, trains and employs socially marginalized people to repair donated second hand bikes, which are then resold.

This gives them skills that may lead to permanent employment. It is run by Causeway Work Centre, an Ottawa-based initiative, and one of three social businesses in the city that cater to people facing barriers to employment.

Will Johnson, a 42-year-old paraplegic, has been participating in the program since May of this year. He says working puts his mind off disability.

"I may be using a wheelchair, but I want to work. I don't feel disabled. I am here not to prove a point



Patricia Grannum, Centretown News

Will Johnson (left), Jacques Daigle (centre) and Paul Wylie repair bikes at Cycle Salvation on the corner of Bronson Avenue and McLeod Street.

but to better my life. I see people everyday on ODSP (Ontario Disability Support Program), who should not be on ODSP." Johnson says that he is happier working because he can file tax claims.

His colleague, 47-year-old Jacques Daigle who has a treat-

able mental illness, says he could only find a job at Cycle salvation.

"I derive great satisfaction from my job. A bike is a mechanic's puzzle. Besides, not every place can accept you when you have sickness."

Daigle has been with Cycle Sal-

vation since it opened in April.

All staff work 12 to 16 hours a week and earn minimum wage. Cycle Salvation's management anticipates that after one year of training, workers can seek other employment in a related industry, or may stay if they wish.

Their target is to release one person and recruit another every year.

In the shop's showroom, 20 bikes are on display. But Paul Wylie, manager and trainer, says they have a stock of close to a hundred bikes.

"We are looking at making it a sustainable venture, not in the sense of making huge profits. Our aim is to have the costs of running the workshop covered."

Wylie says that to keep prices down – bikes sell for between \$100 and \$160 – and the shop profitable, Cycle Salvation has to solely depend on donations.

Luanne Gauvreau, an administrator with Causeway Work Centre, says Cycle Salvation is a business that is concerned with people.

"We want profit, because the venture has to sustain itself. However, a social business emphasizes the people aspect as much as the business aspect."

Cycle Salvation says by recycling the bicycle scrap, they also help the environment.

Bikes may be dropped at the workshop on Tuesdays and Fridays between 9 a.m. and 5:30 p.m., Saturdays between 9 a.m. and 1 p.m. and Sundays between 3 p.m. and 6 p.m.

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