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NEWSWEST



Trainees Mike Bigras, left, and Jacques Daigle, centre, are guided through a bike salvage operation by Paul Wylie, right, head mechanic. The Cycle Salvation is open for business with a small showroom of bikes ready for sale and a basement full of bikes waiting to be refurbished. Photo: Luanne Gavreau

Causeway: Renewed Bikes and New Jobs

By Luanne Gauvreau

There is a place where old bicycles to go to be reborn.

Cycle Salvation is now collecting used and abused bikes, stripping what's bad, keeping what's good, and refurbishing them until they are road-worthy again. Working out of a storefront on Bronson Avenue, Cycle Salvation will work alongside re-Cycles Bicycle Co-op to ensure there are no income or skill barriers facing those who want to own and maintain a bike.

This is the latest social business to be started under the umbrella of Causeway Work Centre. Causeway, located in Hintonburg, hosts a number of employment programs for people with disabilities or who are economically disadvantaged. The nature of a social business is that social objectives are equal to business objectives: a key factor in local community economic development.

Cycle Salvation will provide training to Causeway's clients in the refurbishment of bicycles, building skills while

developing good work habits. The business will also divert bikes destined for scrap or landfill sites, and will offer the renewed bikes and parts for sale to the public at reasonable prices. Even the environmentally friendly practice of cycling can be made greener by keeping old bikes on the road.

It's this union of social and environmental objectives that excites Paul Wylie, program coordinator and lead mechanic.

"This is a great opportunity for the staff at Cycle Salvation to hone their skills and see first-hand the results of their labour. I get a charge watching them breathe life into a dead bike that was on its way to the scrap yard," he says.

Paul is a long-time member of re-Cycles, a volunteer co-op that supports people in maintaining their own bicycles. He will get to put his technical and teaching skills to the test, bringing new life to discarded bikes with his team of trainees, for whom building skills in bike mechanics is a fresh start.

"For some, this may be their first entry into the job market, or their first in a long time. It's important that the experience is a positive one, and at the same time they get adept at making decisions, taking responsibility and learning as they go. These are great transferable skills to have."

Now that they have their work space fully equipped at their Bronson location, the next step is to fill that space with needy bicycles and enthusiastic cyclists. Wylie is hoping that when the spring weather inspires Ottawa cyclists to buy new bikes, they will first check out the stock at Cycle Salvation; prices range from \$40 to \$150, depending on the type and condition of the bikes. And once you have your new bike, Cycle Salvation will gladly take the old one off your hands and set it on its way to being reborn.

Cycle Salvation is located at 477 Bronson Avenue and store hours are Tuesday through Friday from 9 am to 5:30 pm and Saturdays from 9 am to 1 pm.