

Conkey Cruisers

Free Neighborhood Bicycling-to-Better-Health Voyage



Cruising with BWT

June 13, 2016

Ithaca, New York

History



Conkey Cruisers is a grass root neighborhood bicycling program, inspired by Theresa Lou Bowick, a Registered Nurse who lives near Conkey Avenue. While out running one day she encountered a young boy, who yelled out to her, “Hey Lady, are you on probation?” It appeared that the young boy thought she was running from the Police. As she continued her run, she stopped to chat with some neighbors, when another man approached the group. The man pointed at Theresa and said, to the group, “Don’t talk to her she is the Police!” Theresa exclaimed that she was a Nurse, not the Police. However, the man was not convinced. He boldly stated to the group, “She is the Police, because nobody exercises in this neighborhood!”

Disturbed by these encounters, which she deemed a call to action, Theresa was determined to change the negative perception of exercise in her neighborhood. She developed the Conkey Cruisers Bicycling-to-Better-Health Voyage, in hopes that Neighbors will inspire Neighbors to stay active, make healthy food choices, decrease obesity rates, and create a positive image of their neighborhood. Theresa reached out to her neighbors, local businesses, bicycle experts, neighborhood group leaders, and City of Rochester Officials for support.

As Conkey Cruisers was coming into fruition, the final construction phases of the El Camino Trail were being completed. The El Camino Trail is a 2.7 million dollar community investment designed to promote nature, hiking and biking in Northeast Rochester. As luck would have it, the trail runs along Conkey Avenue, providing a perfect route for The Conkey Cruisers Bicycling-to-Better-Health Voyage. Conkey Cruisers were the first official users of the El Camino Trail.

The Conkey Cruiser's inaugural ride took place on July 7, 2012. Theresa believes, "It takes a village to be a village", meaning we all share the responsibility of making our neighborhoods safe and healthy.

Mission

Utilize Bicycling to get Neighbors moving towards a more active healthy lifestyle.

Vision

Neighbors will inspire Neighbors to stay active, make healthy food choices, decrease obesity rates, and create a positive image of our neighborhoods.

Pillars of Success

Fun
Friendship
Fitness
Finance
Food
Faith

Unique Services

Conkey Cruisers operates during evening hours in a challenging neighborhood, providing free, fun, supervised physical activity, healthy eating tips/nutrition education and food budgeting, for ages 2+ with an opportunity for participants to earn a new bicycle, helmet and cash reward for high school graduation.

Future Planning

Acquisition of a building to develop an indoor bicycle park to provide year round cycling opportunities, and health and wellness services to the greater Rochester area unimpeded by inclement weather.

Future Funding

Transition from dependence on grants and donations to billable health services, such as Diabetes Prevention, Hypertension prevention, Medication adherence training and state, city and county contracts for youth programming and health promotion initiatives.

Program Description

Conkey Cruisers is a free grass root neighborhood health and wellness initiative that utilizes bicycling for health promotion. Services are primarily utilized by underserved populations; minorities, women, children, elderly, disabled, Veterans and low income families.

Professional Memberships

Conkey Cruisers are members of the League of American Bicyclist and USA Cycling.

Evening Summer Health Promotion Program

Operates for six weeks during the summer months-mid July-August from 6pm-8pm. Participants ages 2+ meet three days of weeks (18 days) for varying cycling and health and wellness activities. Participants that partake in activities 15 of 18 program days, and adhere to program rules and guidelines will earn a new bicycle and helmet.

- **Baby Cruisers-age 2-5**
- **Kid Cruisers-age 6-12**
- **Teen Cruisers-age 13-17**
- **Adult Cruisers-age 18-54**
- **Golden Cruisers-age 55+**

Participants ages 2-6 cycle per ability, ages 6-17 cycle at least 1 hour, ages 18 and older cycle for at least 30 minutes each program day to earn a brand new bicycle and helmet.

Fresh fruit, unsweetened beverages and healthy snacks are provided each program day.

The goals of the summer program include; having fun, teaching safe cycling, NYS bicycle laws, food budgeting and healthy eating tips. Promoting family fitness, increased physical activity, disease prevention, sportsman's like behavior, education, high school graduation, financial literacy and neighborhood pride.

Cruise & Learn Challenge

2015 Challenge-School age Participants who learn all 44 USA Presidents will earn a limousine ride to a local mall to purchase a new pair of sneakers of their choice for school.

2016 Challenge-School age Participants who learn the first 10 and the last 35 Mayors of Rochester, New York, will earn a limousine ride to a local mall to purchase a new pair of sneakers of their choice for school.

Cruising Counts-Geared Up for Graduation

In collaboration with Advantage Credit Union, Conkey Cruisers provide a High School Graduation Incentive that rewards School age Participants that meet criteria to earn a bicycle, an opportunity to earn a maximum of \$500 cash, to be distributed upon completion of a financial literacy workshop and when New York State High School graduation requirements are met.

Wheels for Warriors

In collaboration with St. John Fisher College, New York State College at Brockport, Monroe Community College, R-Community Bikes and WDKX, Conkey Cruisers honor 50 Veterans with a brand new bicycle and tasty brunch following a one mile community bicycle ride.

Cruising for a Cause

Conkey Cruisers Participants donate bicycles to the less fortunate. In 2015, a bicycle was presented to a Holocaust Survivor whose childhood bicycle was burned when the Nazis bombed her family's home. Seven bicycles were presented to children whose Father was killed in gun violence. This program teaches our participants the importance of giving.



Roc-Unity Rides

Community collaboration to unite police, neighbors and neighborhoods through cycling. Cyclist meet weekly to cycle around various neighborhoods in Rochester with a police escort.

Tour-de-Cure

The American Diabetes Association is a non-profit organization whose mission to prevent and cure diabetes and to improve the lives of all people affected by diabetes, is in concert with the Conkey Cruiser's health promotion goals. Diabetes disproportionately affects members of our organization. The Tour-de-Cure gives the Conkey Cruisers an opportunity to raise crucial funds to send children with diabetes to camp, disperse diabetes educational materials, advocate for the rights of individuals with diabetes in the workplace, school, or other organized settings, and so much more. Training for the annual cycling event keeps our participants physically active during the winter months as they prepare for this early summer event.

Roc-Unity Rydahs-2016 Tour-de-Cure Team



Community Clinical Rotation for Nursing Students

Nursing education programs traditionally require a community clinical rotation. Conkey Cruisers has provided an opportunity for Practical Nursing Students from Wayne Finger Lakes BOCES to engage in Community Nursing under the supervision of a Registered Professional Nurse. The nursing students learn the demographics of the neighborhood, common illnesses in the neighborhood, and challenges and opportunities for health promotion in the neighborhood. In addition, the nursing student's provide first-aid, blood pressure screening, teach healthy eating tips and conclude with a written synopsis of their community clinical experience.

Wearing the Message

Steve Harvey Morning show appearance in 2013 to promote my memoir Collard Green Curves-a fat girl's journey from childhood obesity to healthy living.



Feed-a-Family on \$5

A major goal for the summer program is to teach families living in food deserts and/or, with limited resources how to extend food dollars. Conkey Cruisers Participants ride their bikes to a local grocery store, where they are each given \$5. They are taught how to purchase enough healthy food items, to prepare one meal for 4 individuals. The meal must include a fruit or vegetable. Bonus points are given if the meal includes dessert. This is one of the most empowering lessons taught.

It's Your Turn-You have only \$5.00



What would you buy with to feed your family?

Where will you buy food?

Highlights

2012-112 participants

2013-103 participants

2014-146 participants

2015-267 participants



White House Easter Egg Roll 2016