Cameron Park Rotary Bicycle Program

February, 2023



A bicycle for a refugee child from Ukraine. A bicycle for a child, and maybe their parents, who lost everything in a wildfire. A bicycle for a kid that wouldn't otherwise have one. A bicycle for a homeless person that gives them their only means of transportation.

For these kids and adults, the Rotary Club of Cameron Park gives them a new start and new horizons, and maybe their only mode of transportation, with the gift of a bicycle.

For more than 15 years the Rotary Club of Cameron Park has given away bicycles to kids, homeless adults, wildfire victims, and now Ukrainian and Afghan refugees.

The Cameron Park Rotary bike program is unique as are the partnerships that helped it succeed and flourish. Many of the bikes are collected at the local Refuse Disposal site managed by Waste connections. Rotarians transport these bikes and others donated by friends and neighbors to the Folsom Prison.



At the prison, inmates restore them, and through several partnerships the bikes are then distributed, along with helmets for the kids, to those that need them.

The latest partnership with Lao Family Community Development and Bethany Slavic Missionary Church in Rancho Cordova helps newly arrived refugees find housing, employment and education (in their charter school), enabling them to become self-sufficient community members.

The club's bicycle giveaways — 6,000 bikes and counting — began with Rotarians Joe Ryan and Chuck Le Pere in 2007, when Ryan was club president and also served as a member of the California State Prison Citizen Advisory Committee and with the Hangtown Marine Corps League helping with Toys for Tots. His interests launched a collaboration between Folsom Prison and the Toys for Tots initiative of giving new toys to needy children at Christmas.



Le Pere, an advisor with the Ponderosa High School Interact Club, promoted the project to El Dorado County elementary schools and he received student recipient lists from teachers. Ponderosa students helped deliver the bikes and helmets and the project became so popular it was necessary to find additional partnerships to help with distribution.

It has since expanded to a year-round operation that serves youth and adult residents in much of Northern California, including not only El Dorado County but also Alameda, Butte, Placer and Sacramento counties.

Thanks to efforts of Cameron Park Rotarians, hundreds of bicycles and bicycle parts are now donated throughout the year by community members and local organizations. Bikes are refurbished by Folsom Prison inmates utilizing supplies donated by the Rotary program.

The program provides a win-win for everyone. Nothing goes to waste; even bicycles determined to be unsalvageable are sold to salvage yards for the metal

and the money used to purchase safety helmets and other parts. Furthermore, the program gives inmates the opportunity to give back to their communities while learning skills that benefit them upon their release, not to mention the growth of their confidence and self-esteem.

The program has promoted partnerships with myriad of governmental departments and organizations, nonprofits and churches. Rotary regularly teams up with Waste Connections, social service agencies, welfare departments, parole/rehabilitation agencies, Make-A-Wish Foundation, Union Gospel Mission, Bayside Church, Volunteers of America, chambers of commerce, Folsom Moose and Kiwanis and veterans' organizations. These groups are instrumental in helping to identify deserving children and adults needing a mode of transportation and in helping with distribution of the bicycles.



Word has spread in the community, so now people with bicycles in their garages think to donate to the Rotary Club of Cameron Park, knowing that their bikes will brighten someone's life.

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