

Insider
For June 3, 2009
By Kim Burger



Last Friday wrapped up the final of four Friday Night Loops events coordinated by the Encouragement Committee, and sponsored by the Cedar Trails Partnership. The Encouragement Committee is a subcommittee of the Cedar Falls Bicycle Task Force whose goal is to encourage utilitarian bicycling. While we've established ourselves as a recreational bicycling capital of sorts with our 90+ miles of trails, the committee's purpose in planning these events was to encourage the general public to consider bicycling beyond recreational purposes. This entails the safe coexistence of bicycles *and* automobiles on our city streets. The benefits are many, including a greener environment, lessened automobile congestion, and a healthier population to name a few. While rainy weather challenged the riders during the first two events, we still managed to draw participants for each ride totaling over 100 to the events overall.

Each session began with an explanation of the committee's goals, a review of the planned route, and a brief refresher course of bicycling safety rules provided by committee member Jon Taiber. Each session had members of the Cedar Trails Patrol in attendance and explored a different part of the community. Each was led by a different set of leaders including members of the Bicycle Task Force, Iowa Representative Bob Kressig, Cedar Valley Cyclists, and finally, Mayor Jon Crews and Councilman David Wieland, chair of the committee. With the mayor and committee chairperson leading the final ride it seemed appropriate to celebrate our recent designation as Iowa's first Bicycle Friendly Community. An official certificate and street signage provided by the American League of Bicyclists were presented to the mayor. These signs will be posted at the entrances to our city letting visitors and newcomers know they can ride safely here and that they are encouraged to do so.

The Bicycle Friendly Committee understands on-road bicycling represents a slight shift in thinking for some and is prepared to work toward a safe and thoughtful transition. In addition to encouragement, education needs to take place so both cyclists and motorists are aware of one another's rights and responsibilities because each carries both. Certain engineering changes need to take place over time as well. New bike racks donated by the Cedar Falls RAGBRAI committee are being installed on the UNI campus and in the College Hill Business District. Community Main Street is also installing additional bike racks and accommodations. Watch for more encouragement and educational opportunities and be on the lookout, for "Share the Road" signage, bike lanes and other accommodations. It's going to be a great summer for cycling!