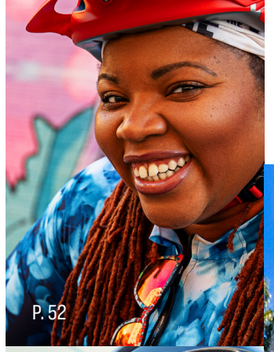

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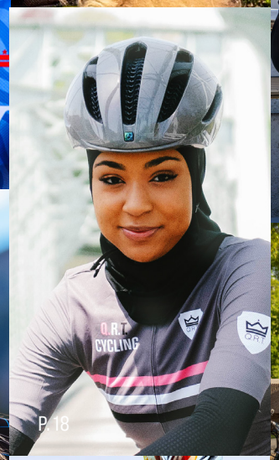












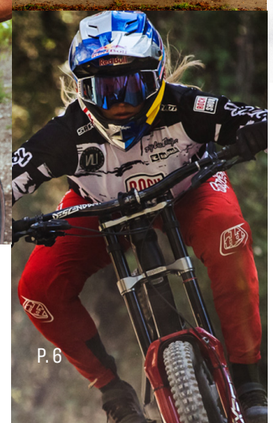












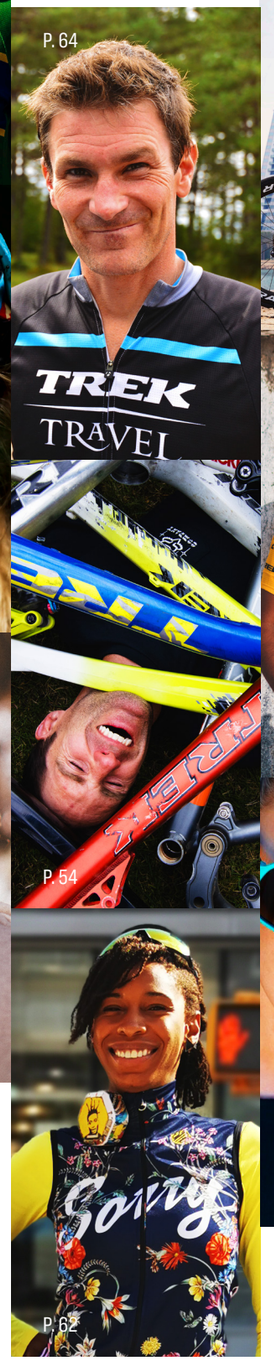






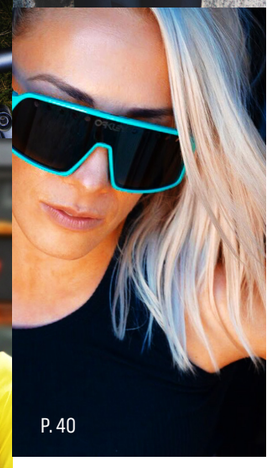













# *This is a book about heroes.*

From parking lots in New York to pathways in Bahrain, these 22 riders are inspiring, teaching, and encouraging more people to find happiness on two wheels.

Some are Trek Ambassadors welcoming new riders and working to better the sport through diversity, some are athletes pushing the limits of what's possible, some are ordinary people with extraordinary strength of spirit. And one is a Goldendoodle.

Whether they're lobbying for bikes in the House Chamber, inspiring a wider range of athletes to hop in the saddle, or just making people smile, these riders represent the very best of cycling's present and future.

Each in their own way, they're sharing happiness and promoting a message that's core to what Trek believes: bikes have the power to change lives and the world, and everyone deserves to experience all the fun they can offer.

**Brodie and Cliff, Trek Ambassadors**

# Pawsitive vibes only

*Cycling's first dog-mestique is spreading joy on the streets of southern Florida and beyond*

If you find yourself on the streets of Boca Raton, Florida, keep an eye out for the most adorable sight on two wheels—Cliff Brush and his Goldendoodle, Brodie. Thankfully they're hard to miss, because Brodie is 70-pounds of handsome fluff sporting custom-made doggles and Cliff pedals a fluorescent yellow Trek Madone. But most eye-catching of all, Brodie enjoys the ride perched in a backpack. Yes, a backpack! He looks like he's giving Cliff a big bear hug as they ride along the beach.

Cliff started biking with Brodie on his back for fun, but they're not the only ones who enjoy the ride. The duo is met with grins every time they go out, and Brodie has dogloads of followers—over 250 thousand on Instagram and 1.5 million on TikTok. When asked to comment on his newfound fame, Brodie barked triumphantly. Which we translate to mean, "Wow, this is a ton of fun! Let's go for another loop and see more smiles!"

*@BrodieThatDood & @CliffThatDude on Instagram*



# Swim, bike, run, give

**Thiago Vinhal, Trek Athlete**

*The first Black professional triathlete to race Ironman World Championships is working hard to ensure he's far from the last*

Thiago Vinhal is a natural born athlete. He was a self-described "very energetic kid" who loved sports and struggled to sit still. Triathlon was the perfect outlet, testing his seemingly bottomless energy reserves across three disciplines.

Vinhal followed his passion all the way to the upper echelons of his sport. When he finished 13th at the Ironman World Championship in 2017, he was not only the fastest Brazilian competitor, but the first Black pro racer to ever take part in Kona.

That result, at age 34, was the culmination of decades of dedication to his craft, going back to when he was 17 years old and training on a 10-speed. "I rode the bike in a street by my home and a lot of these guys commuting to construction work with normal clothes and wearing backpacks were passing me," Vinhal said. "I thought: 'Oh my gosh, I'm so bad.'"

Vinhal persevered, and now he's giving back to his community with his Colors for Kona program. The program gives food packs to families in Brazilian favelas with kids who get good grades and compete in running, cycling, and/or swimming. When he spoke to Trek last July, Vinhal said that he had been able to support 70 families for three years through the program.

Vinhal overcame a lack of resources to reach his athletic potential. Now he's doing his best to make sure other young Brazilian athletes receive the same opportunities he created for himself. He knows there are so many more stories with the power to inspire, just like his.

"Every one of us has a very beautiful story," Vinhal said. "You need to learn how to tell it for people in a soft, motivational way, as a positive story. Then they start to dream with you."

COLORS IN KONA









Vali Höll, Rockshox-Trek Athlete

# Downhill's roll model

*Vali Höll, at 19 years old, has already won races and posted times that place her squarely among the fastest downhill riders in the world. She has won two Junior World Championships and 11 Junior World Cup races; her trajectory and notoriety are rising fast.*

And yet, the Rockshox-Trek Race Team rider doesn't want anyone to make a big fuss just yet. She's just happy to be on the world stage.

"I would never say I'm a pro because it doesn't feel like I am," Höll says. "I still have all my heroes racing in the World Cups, and every time I see them I'm super excited and nervous to talk to them."

The life of a burgeoning downhill star can be pretty weird. Höll has only been able to focus her full attention on racing since June 2020, when she graduated high school. Though it may seem like she's been around for years, Höll's career is still in its infancy. But she's already realizing how much of an impact she can have.

"I'm still looking up to bike riders at the moment, and I still would like to take a photo with them." Höll says. "And now kids want to do the same with me."

As a young girl, Höll was inspired by the likes of Rachel Atherton, who grew up riding with her older brothers. Atherton's path to success was especially relatable to Höll as the only elite women's downhill racer in her home country of Austria. In fact, in Höll's first race, she had to compete against the boys. (She beat all of them.)

But this disparity is something Höll is already influencing, even if she won't admit it.

"Now there are so many 12- and 13-year-old girls [riding] and my dad says it's because of me," Höll says. "I don't feel like it is, but I wish it was because of me."

***"My biggest dream is to inspire young kids like my heroes inspired me."***

Höll is leading the next generation of great women downhill racers by example and proving that her exceptionalism and place within mountain biking are the most natural things in the world. And she's doing it with a humble, happy heart.

Alex Clark, Teacher and coach

# Forever Prime

*When a D.C. teacher saw what school closures would mean for his students, he turned to bikes. And that changed everything.*

At the start of the pandemic, as an air of uncertainty and worry settled over the world, Alex Clark had one thing on his mind: what was going to happen to his kids? Clark, a Health and Physical Education teacher at Dunbar High School in Washington, D.C., knew what school closures could mean for his students, and it wasn't an especially welcome thought.

All at once, the stability of the school day—schedules and commitments, in-school meals, the important outlet provided by organized sports—vanished, leaving the kids he loved in a worrisome state of unknown, without a structure that would keep them out of trouble and progressing on the right path.

With so much at stake, he knew he had to do something.

Like all great teachers, he put himself in the shoes of his students. He tried to see this new world from their perspective. And then one day, while on a bike ride, he was struck by a powerful idea he couldn't shake: what would it take to share this with his students?

"Like a lot of people, I liked bikes as a kid," he says. "I'd picked up biking as a hobby at the start of the pandemic, and I was having a great time with it. And if I do something that's a great experience, I feel a need to share it with my kids."

He saw that bikes could be the key that unlocked greater opportunities for his students. Here was this perfect tool that allows people to connect in socially distant environments, provides physical and mental activity, and can even be used to teach his students about their hometown.

“On a bike,” Alex says, “you look at places from a different perspective. No matter where you are in life, you can hop on a bike and go to your peaceful place.”

Before the pandemic, Alex founded Prime Ability, a program designed to build communities and inspire young people through fitness. Through community- and wellness-based events, the program fosters a healthy environment for students that extends beyond the classroom and gives kids the tools they need to overcome obstacles and succeed in both athletics and academics.

He knew bikes could be another great gateway to reach students—but where could he get the bikes? And would his kids even be interested?

What you need to know about Alex is that, when it comes to bringing happiness and opportunity to kids, he’s an at-all-costs sort of guy—and he’s also a guy who gets things done. With a vision of what the cycling experience could offer his students, he set up a GoFundMe and made a case to the community.

He didn’t expect the outpouring of support and donations that came to him. Within a week, his fundraising surpassed $5,000, and his spark of an idea looked suddenly like it could become something real.

“I bought as many bikes as possible,” Alex says, “and used the rest of the money to get a U-Haul to pick up bikes people in the community wanted to donate. This was a true it-takes-a-village moment, where the community came together to make this happen. We got donations from more than 400 people I’ve never even met.”

His experience with Prime Ability put him in familiar territory for organizing events. But launching the Prime Ability Biking Program presented some new logistical challenges, especially when it came to equipment.

Through a local Trek grant program, Alex received support in the form of WaveCel helmets and gear for the riders. And he continued building his bike collection. Every bike he found was one more student who could be having a great experience.

“At first, I honestly didn’t sleep,” he says, laughing. “But it wasn’t something I looked at as a chore. I enjoy setting a goal—get five bikes this week—and then reaching it. That sets an example for my kids.”

With the equipment covered, there was the issue of participation and what Alex refers to as the “leap of faith” he was asking his students to take. Prime Ability operates on a philosophy of H.E.A.R.T., which stands for humility, effort, ambition, respect, and teamwork.

*“I ask my kids: do you have enough H.E.A.R.T. to step outside of the comfort zone and be something other than what people are telling you to be, or are you trying to fit what people say you should be?”*

Show up and it’ll be fun, he promised them.

Rain poured from the sky and filled the streets with puddles on the day of Prime Ability Cycling Program’s first scheduled ride. Still, 25 students took a leap of faith and showed up outside Dunbar High School to pick out bikes from the collection Alex had amassed.

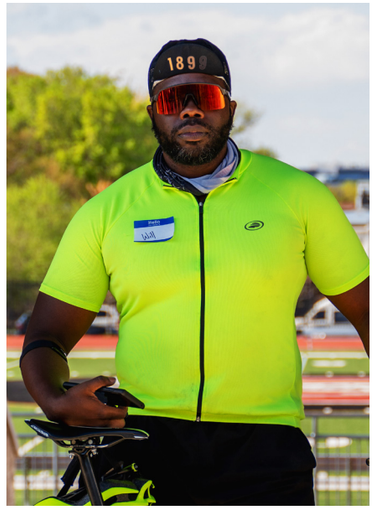
As they cruised together to the Washington Monument, Alex was filled with hope.

He told his students that next week, they each had to bring a friend. And for the next ride, to BLM Plaza, 40 students showed up. The next week: 80. And today, the Prime Ability Biking Program hosts two or three rides a week. On a nice day, it’s not unusual for over 100 students to ride.







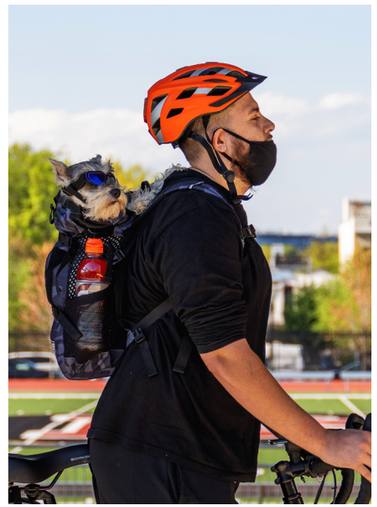























At Dunbar High School, one of the country's first public high schools to admit Black students, bike rides have become an outlet and something students look forward to. But even more than that, they've become family and community events (parents often volunteer and accompany students on rides) and a way to promote life lessons.

"Kids are setting personal goals and seeing the accomplishment," Alex says. "Now kids say, 'Not only is this fun, but I'm also able to hang out with my friends outside of school.' It's how they spend time together."

The program is growing and changing. Alex puts a big emphasis on upperclassman leadership as a way to prepare kids for college. *"At this point,"* he says, *"it's really the kids leading the program!"*

And for some of Alex's students, bikes have become a central part of their lives.

As an extension of this program, he launched the Prime Ability NICA team, which will begin practice this summer for the fall racing season. Several of Alex's students were beneficiaries in the first round of the Trek Pathfinders Scholarship, which supplies student-athletes with a new bike, gear, and stipend for race entry fees. These students and others are looking at bikes in a new light, as something somehow more meaningful than a fun hobby.

As Alex sees it, the sky's the limit for the program and its best days are still ahead. He's quick to credit the outpouring of volunteers, supporters, and, most importantly, the students who make this program a success. And, through this experience, he holds bikes with special reverence, too, as tools for bringing people together and making good things happen.

"When you're on a bike," he says, "there's more out there, even when it's right in front of you."

# Rolling with Dice

## *Meet the woman shifting public policy and setting the pace for PeopleForBikes*

When Jenn Dice raced her first Leadville 100, she cried at the starting line. The notoriously difficult mountain bike race was daunting enough on its own, but when paired with freezing rain and a flooded course, it felt damn near impossible.

Thirteen hours later, Jenn became one of less than half of 800 participants to cross the finish line that day. She has completed the race 14 times since.

Jenn is no stranger to hard work and setbacks, typical for a long-time outdoor industry lobbyist who is often competing against political giants in big-time industries like oil and gas.

Jenn, who started her career as a transportation lobbyist in the greater Denver area, became the Director of Government Affairs for the International Mountain Bike Association (IMBA) in 2001 after happening upon their booth at a local mountain bike event. During her time there, she grew their government affairs program from 20 to 60 people and was recognized by Outside Magazine as one of their “25 most influential people in the world outside.”





*“If you ride your bike pretty much anywhere but on a road, you owe Jenn Dice a beer,”*

they wrote. You’ll be hard-pressed to find anyone in the cycling industry who disagrees.

But Jenn’s journey didn’t end on the trails. After over ten years at IMBA, she was ready to tackle a new set of cycling concerns, this time on the pavement as the VP of Government Relations for PeopleForBikes, a leading cycling advocacy group that works on the local and national level to lobby for meaningful change in bike infrastructure. “I get to lobby for my hobby,” Jenn says.

Jenn was promoted to COO in 2019 and became President and CEO in July, 2020, while the world was grappling with a global pandemic. She saw an opportunity for bikes to help heal.

*“We believe in the power of the bike to help America recover,” Jenn says.*

She and her team believe bikes are the solution to many of the world’s problems, from COVID recovery to climate change, equitable mobility, and more. But these solutions don’t come without their own set of barriers.

“People won’t ride at all if they don’t have a safe place to ride close to home,” Jenn says. That’s why PeopleForBikes is working around the clock to help cities build complete cycling networks, accelerate bike infrastructure, bring bike share to underserved communities, and more.

Within her first month, Jenn and the PeopleForBikes team also took a hard look at everything they work on and asked, “how can we be better?”

This led to their all-new Mobility and Justice Action Plan, which promotes equitable access to biking and positions bikes as a solution to social and mobility justice issues. The plan focuses on key changes like rethinking public spaces to encourage more people to spend time outside, securing federal funding for research that highlights inequalities in underserved communities, and developing purchase incentive programs to help make bikes more accessible for a wider range of riders.

“Our industry DEI committee meets weekly, with a goal of developing more intentional community planning,” Jenn says. “No matter where you live, you should have the opportunity to move about freely in your community.”

This effort is personified with their Better Bike Share Partnership, which helps bring “equitable and replicable” bike share systems to marginalized communities.

Jenn and the PeopleForBikes team have also activated 67 ambassadors as part of their Ride Spot program to show the simple joys of cycling to a more diverse audience.

“We have intentionally picked ambassadors that represent every kind of bike rider,” Jenn says. “They ride in amazing places, tell their stories, and help remove barriers for people who are new to cycling and might not know where to ride yet.”

Jenn explains that this new program is especially crucial given that in the past year, according to a recent study, 10% of American adults rode a bike for the first time, 12% bought a new bike, and 13% planned to buy a bike for the first time.

The PeopleForBikes team is doing everything in their power to ensure these new riders keep riding by constantly working to improve cycling conditions across the country.

“We testify, write letters, and have in-person and virtual meetings to make sure that when elected officials think about equity, they think about bikes. When they think about transportation, they think about bikes. And when they think about environmental impact, they think about bikes,” Jenn says of their efforts to influence public policy.

And with congress recently introducing the E-BIKE Act, which would provide a tax credit of up to $1,500 for those who purchase an electric bike, Jenn is optimistic about the future.

“The world is changing,” she says. “And we want to change with it.”

Want to get involved? You can support the E-BIKE Act by filling out this simple form encouraging your state representative to cosponsor the bill: **action.peopleforbikes.org/e-bike-act.**

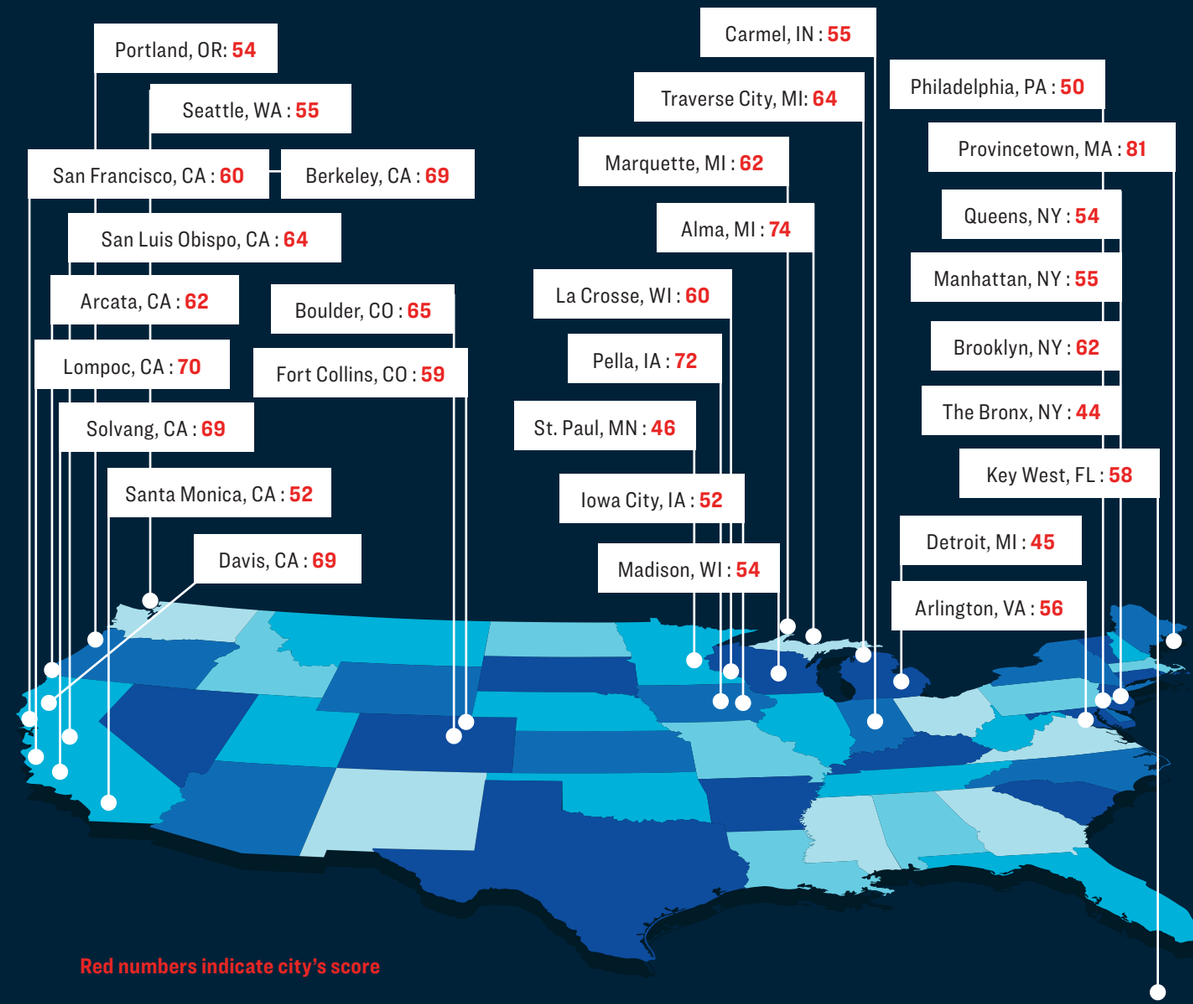
To learn more about PeopleForBikes and help make cycling better in your hometown, visit **www.peopleforbikes.org/take-action.**



## PlacesForBikes

# TOP 30

## United States cities for biking in 2021




Red numbers indicate city’s score

# The royals







## Curran J, Founder
### *Kings Rule Together*

One serendipitous Sunday afternoon, Curran J borrowed his brother's bike and helmet to go on a group ride. Instantly he knew he wanted to ride more, so he began looking for his own gear. Due to his then-limited knowledge of bikes and cycling equipment, Curran spent weeks researching and worrying about what to purchase and how much to spend.

Eventually, Curran found the right bike for him. But he knew he didn't want other new riders—especially new riders of color—to have the same frustrating setbacks. That's what inspired him to found Kings Rule Together Cycling Club.

"I am passionate about being able to accelerate the learning process for all who are new to cycling," he said, "because through necessary education riders are able to focus on what really matters—getting out and on bikes."

Over the past few years, Curran has ridden with people from all different backgrounds and walks of life. Each comes to cycling with a different level of skill and equipment. "Some riders I encounter have all the necessary bells and whistles before even attempting their first ride, while others come without even the basics, like a helmet or a water bottle."

His goal for the future is to close this gap as much as possible. "Some say cycling is an expensive sport. I say it's as expensive as you want it to be. Through things like the Trek Bike 101 Workshop we are working to flatten the expense curve, and prevent riders from feeling deterred because of finances."

At the workshops, new members receive essential items to prepare them for the cycling season: a helmet, lights, and a flat repair kit. But even more importantly, K.R.T. and their workshops provide opportunities for riders to gain cycling knowledge and establish ties with like-minded individuals—all of which help new riders take to the streets filled with confidence and a sense of true camaraderie.

## Yasmeen Watson, Ride leader
### *Queens Rule Together*

Philadelphia is known for its rich bike culture, and Yasmeen Watson grew up racing her siblings through the neighborhood, seeing her father and grandfather ride motorcycles, and watching groups of young men pop wheelies with joy. But cycling wasn't something she really saw herself doing—until 2020.

"I was initially turned on to the idea of cycling after seeing all of the fun that people were having with the sport [on social media]. Honestly, I'd never seen young Black people on road bikes, so the idea of being a part of the newly emerging community in the city was appealing," she says.

She soon discovered Queens Rule Together (Q.R.T.) Cycling Club, the women's offshoot of Kings Rule Together, and it changed everything. "It felt like a family from the very beginning," she said. "The encouragement, support, and energy that I get from the group is unmatched, and I love coming together with my peers to do something we all enjoy that's clean, healthy, and positive."

Though their connection may have started with cycling, it reaches far beyond group ride meet-ups. "As a predominantly minority-based club, the network that we are creating is invaluable. It has allowed each of us to lean on one another for resources, advice, and expertise."

"Our club motto is, 'Strength in Numbers,'" she continues, "and we operate with the understanding that through coming together, we all have the capacity to be the best versions of ourselves. We push one another to achieve our individual and collective goals, both in the sport and in our everyday lives."

***Bahraini women didn't ride bikes.***
**Sarah Alsammak *didn't care.***

# Breaking barriers in Bahrain




Look around any US neighborhood on a balmy summer day and you'll see lots of little girls pedaling their hearts out, grinning. But in other places around the world, this common sight would seem remarkable. Groundbreaking cycling advocates like Sarah Alsammak are working to change that.

When she was young, "cycling was NOT popular at all, and certainly not popular with local girls," says Sarah. "Riding for local girls used to be considered sort of forbidden and bizarre." In fact, the first time she rode a bike wasn't in her home country of Bahrain, but in British Columbia while on a family vacation.

When she did start riding in Bahrain, she began breaking barriers right away. Her first bike was a Trek Discovery Channel road bike purchased from her local bike shop. She later learned that the shop employees were amazed to see her, as she was the first local woman to walk in and buy a bike. Yes—the first.

Once she had a ride of her own, Sarah was unstoppable. She started cycling with women ex-pats—there were almost no Bahraini women riding at the time—and found she loved the thrill of moving fast on two wheels. Almost immediately her presence began to raise awareness for women's cycling. "I got stopped several times and passing-by drivers would take a picture when they noticed me."

When her group of riding friends left Bahrain, Sarah mustered up the courage to join a men's cycling club and started to train seriously. "After some local races, I did a couple of international races and rides, like a Global Biking Initiative (GBI) ride of 850km from Budapest to Munich, Maratona dles Dolomites, and Spinney's Dubai 92 four times." She was the only woman from the GCC (Gulf Cooperation Council, a union of Arab states bordering the Persian Gulf) to do the GBI ride, and the first Arab woman to race Maratona dles Dolomites.

When she became a mom, Sarah's cycling shifted gears a little. Instead of racing, she focused on riding for fun and fitness with a friend. She took tons of fun photos on their adventures, and after posting them on social media, "more girls started approaching me and asking if they could join our rides!" Just like that, the Cycling Bees were formed, named after Sarah's beloved yellow and black Madone.

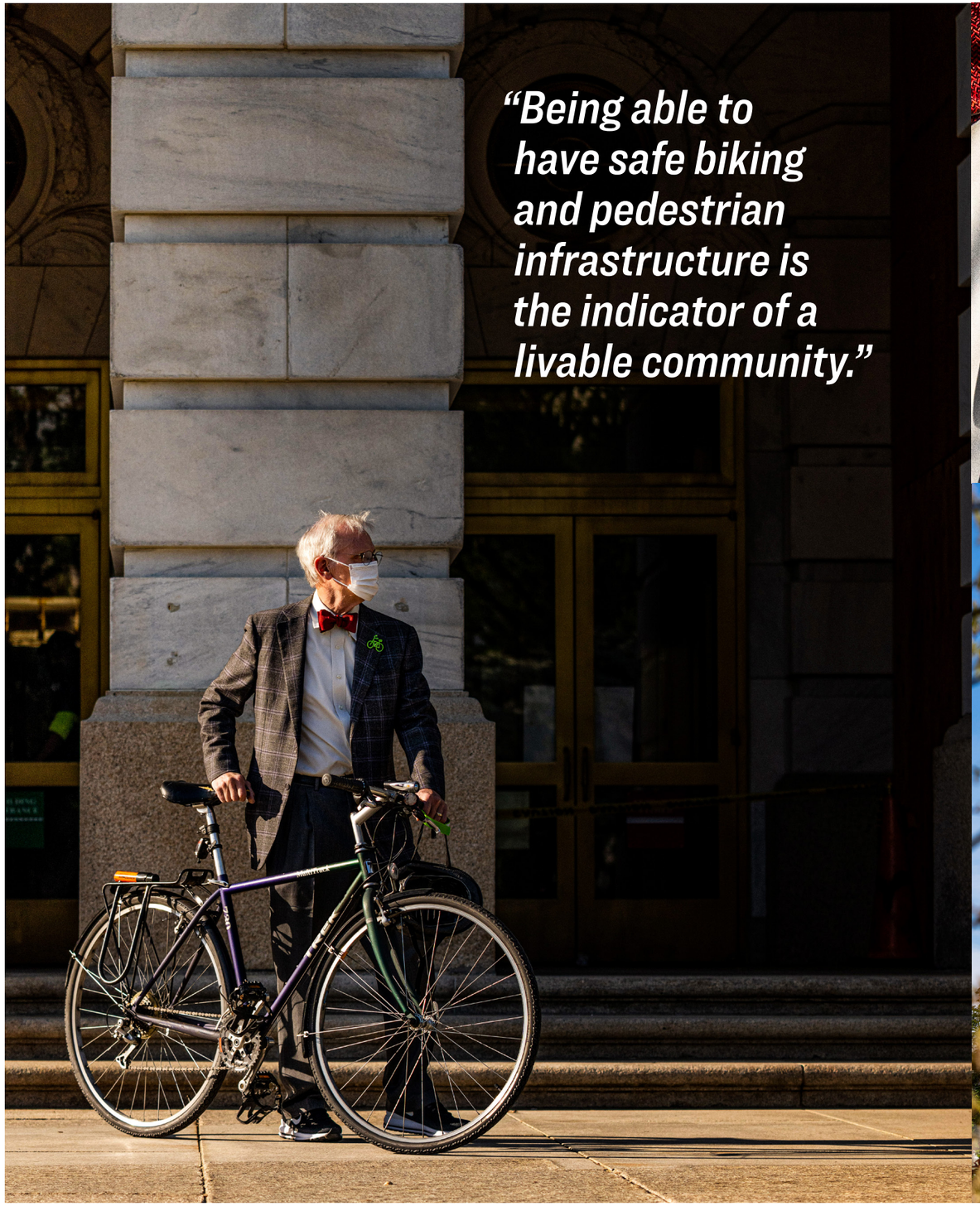
The Cycling Bees started with a group of five women, and now at least 50 meet for the group's weekly rides. And three years ago, Sarah got her British Cycling coaching certification in order to introduce more women to the fun and freedom of cycling. "I saw a good percentage of girls who couldn't ride a bike!" She now coaches at least 15 women a month, teaching them riding fundamentals and road cycling etiquette.

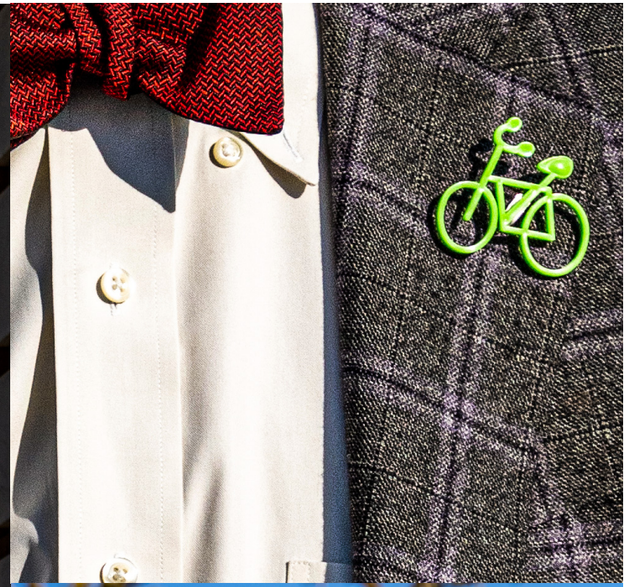
For Sarah, this group is an opportunity to help women learn a lifelong sport, have a blast, and feel empowered. "I decided to keep the rides for women only as there is nothing else in this country that is for women only," she says. "I wanted to encourage more girls to come and ride in a comfortable environment without feeling the urge to compete against boys."

Congressman Earl Blumenauer

# Cycling's power player

*One of the U.S.' most influential cyclists has a preference for bow ties and big ideas. Congressman Earl Blumenauer (D-Oregon) has been fighting for bicycle- and pedestrian-friendly public infrastructure since his time in the Oregon state legislature, and that passion was brought to Washington in 1996 after he was elected to represent Oregon's third congressional district in the House of Representatives.*





“It all started for me when I was a kid, and grew when I was in the Oregon legislature,” he says. “I used a bike to get around Salem. I wouldn’t describe myself as a fanatical cyclist, I just believe it’s the most efficient transportation there is, and it’s just worked for me. And I’ve never stopped.”

While maybe not a self-described fanatic, Congressman Blumenauer—the founder and current co-chair of the Congressional Bike Caucus—is clearly as committed as it comes. “I don’t own a car in DC because it’s just part of my commitment. And as a matter of public policy, the bicycle has taken on a pretty significant role. Cycling policy builds on what we did in Portland.”

But leading by example can have its ironic moments as well. “I got a call from Vice President Al Gore, who invited me to the White House to talk about environmental policy. So, I biked up there for the meeting. I get to the gate, and security had no idea what to do with me. I presented my credentials, told them I had a meeting with the Vice President, and they looked at me like I had three heads. They wouldn’t let me in. I asked them what they would do if I had driven a car. They said, ‘Well, we would have let you in.’ I responded, ‘Well, I’m here,’ and they finally let me lean my bike on one of the pillars in the front. I was stopped on a bike on my way to a meeting about environmental policy. I got to tweak the Vice President on that one a little.”

From his first days in Congress, Representative Blumenauer has been a voice for building support for safer, more sustainable infrastructure. “When I first got here, there was only one other regular cyclist in Congress, but a lot has changed since then,” he says.

“I had ridden my bike on Pennsylvania Avenue from the Capitol to the National Bike Summit and I thought, ‘This road is wide enough to land a 747 on; why is there no safe way to ride a bike?’ Well, the Secretary of Transportation, Ray LaHood, and I made a commitment that we were going to get bike lanes on Pennsylvania Avenue. We worked with Gabe Klein to get the resources and worked with local DC officials, and we were able to put down bike lanes in less than two years along the whole road and it’s been a spectacular success.

“We are in desperate need of investments in a low carbon future. This is about public health. Being able to have safe biking and pedestrian infrastructure is the indicator of a livable community. It knits communities together and gets more capacity out of existing infrastructure. In Oregon, I knew we had arrived when we had businesses lobby to remove car spaces in favor of bike parking because it meant they could accommodate more customers and it meant a difference in their business.”

Congressman Blumenauer sees a chance for real progress. “There was only one other regular cyclist in Congress when I arrived, but we now have a Secretary of Transportation who recently used bike share to get to a meeting and understands why a low carbon future is important. We have a fabulous Deputy Secretary of Transportation who ran New York’s transportation office. We have a suite of new legislation that would reinstate and enhance bicycle commuter benefits based upon commuter benefits people have for driving. We’ve got a tax credit for electric bikes. Electric bikes are game-changers. We have work on Vision Zero which is so important to making progress to making pedestrians and cyclists safer. We have seen communities that have embraced Vision Zero dramatically reduce conflicts between cars and bikes.”

While there is more being done on a federal level today than in many years, Congressman Blumenauer believes in the massive potential that exists on the local level and offered the following advice for those interested in transforming the places they live: “It starts with families and schools. Start with programs that ensure kids can get to school on a bike safely. There is always somebody on a city council who cares a lot about livable communities. If there’s no bicycle and pedestrian advisory committee, start one. Work with the people who manage traffic where you live. Take the opportunity to understand how cities work and work with local businesses to talk about how more pedestrians and people on bikes can help their business.”

***“This road is wide enough to land a 747 on; why is there no safe way to ride a bike?”***






# From the stadium to the saddle




## *David Bruton is leveraging bikes and books to help kids*

There's something special about witnessing a former professional football star take up cycling after a successful career on the field. It's a signal that bikes can come to be a meaningful part of anyone's life at any time. And that's just what they've become for David Bruton, who starred as a strong safety and special teamer on the Denver Broncos, and who these days is more likely to be found strapping on a bike helmet than football pads.

Bruton has built a legacy of bettering communities through education and hands-on learning, and bikes have now become a central part of his story.

He started Bruton's Books, a program designed to help low-income youth in the Denver metro area become strong readers and build skills for succeeding beyond the classroom. Bruton's Books provides books to underfunded schools, libraries, and classrooms to help close the reading achievement gap between students from low-income families and their more affluent peers.

For Bruton and the program, the goal is to ensure all children are competent readers by the end of the third grade. "Bruton's Books came to be because I'm an avid reader," he said. "I wanted to do something out of the norm for a football player, and I had a vision to improve overall literacy in our youth."

Reading and education are central passions for David Bruton. And, as it turns out, "out of the norm" is somewhat, well, normal for him. In 2011, during the offseason, Bruton served as a substitute elementary and high school teacher in Miamisburg, Ohio, his former school district.

And in 2015, he was named the Broncos' Walter Payton NFL Man of the Year, in part for his service to the community through organizations like Bruton's Books and Fuel Up to Play 60, a health and wellness program that empowers students and educators to build healthier lives.

"I was the guy that was always reading in the locker room or in the training room, or even in the cold tub," he said. There's brain and there's brawn, but truly great athletes have both. So, when some of his former teammates called him a nerd, Bruton took pride in the name and considered it an honor.

Because as he sees it, there's an important connection between education and athletics. "Through my work with Fuel Up to Play 60, I've had the opportunity to understand the importance of fitness and reading comprehension, and how physical wellness can aid in retaining information."

For this, Bruton is turning to bikes—and through his foundation's "Bike for Books," a family-friendly ride and fundraiser supporting Bruton's Books, he's leveraging this connection between physical activity and education to help kids perform better in the classroom and all walks (or rides) of life.

Bruton is committed to the two-wheeled life in all its forms—so much so that he has a bike tattoo on his calf. But he's even more committed to helping kids in his community. In the post-pandemic world, Bruton plans to expand his literacy program to more elementary schools in need and provide more tutors and mentors to the Denver and Aurora public schools systems. And he also plans to continue promoting wellness through bikes.

Want to ride with David? You can find him on the trails and roads in Colorado. Want to help David make a difference? Donate at **brutonsbooks.org** and be part of the story he's making about opportunity for generations to come.

Kiran Kumar Raju, Trek Athlete

# Bringing mountain biking to billions

*Against all odds, Kiran Kumar Raju quit his day job to become a professional mountain biker. Now he's blazing a path for more to follow.*

Bangalore, India, consistently ranks as one of the most congested cities in the world, making it a difficult place for dedicated cyclists to train. But Raju, who prefers to go by "KKR" for short, always enjoyed the adrenaline rush of weaving between cars. In college he would time trial to class, leaving his home later than he should for a little extra motivation to beat his previous bests.

KKR parlayed those daredevil instincts into a decorated mountain biking career that includes nine Indian National Championship medals, three of them gold. His road to the top of India's cycling scene wasn't easy. He started his career in earnest at 28 years old after quitting his job as a civil engineer, at a time when there weren't many cyclists who looked like him.

KKR also needed the blessing of his family and loved ones to realize his goal. He was helping his parents with daily needs and contributing to his brother's college fees when he decided to become a full-time racer. But they told him to follow his dreams.




*Kiran Kumar Raju was a bike racer long before he ever lined up behind starting tape.*

KKR depended on borrowed bikes from local benefactors so that he could race and keep his family afloat. Eventually he signed with Trek, and his full-time racing career was a quick success.

The result of KKR's uncommon energy and drive is one of the most unlikely and impactful cycling careers imaginable. He's proud of how far his country has come in terms of supporting cycling, but he'd like to see it go even further.

*KKR has become one of India's biggest ambassadors for the sport, and an incredible resource for up-and-coming cyclists who haven't yet found sponsors. Becoming a professional mountain biker requires business acumen as well as physical talent and toil. And according to KKR, many people in India are unaware of the possibilities within the sport.*

From training in a dense urban area, to building a support network, to marketing himself, KKR made mountain biking a viable profession. Now he wants to pass along the blueprint as a mentor, and continue to grow the size and popularity of the sport for more Indian riders.

"Just understanding how an event is conducted at an international level gave me a lot of exposure and knowledge about the sport itself," KKR says. "So I want to share this and talk to the kids and their parents, because parents clearly have no knowledge in the sport, apart from seeing the local races."

"My journey can help kids and their parents dream big."

There is only one Kiran Kumar Raju, the man who gave up a steady career so he could realize his athletic potential at a time where it seemed impossible for any Indian athlete. But because he succeeded, so will countless more. And KKR will do his best to make it so.



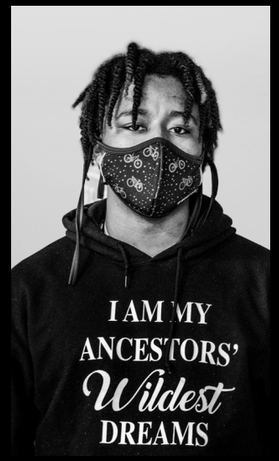









*"My journey can help kids and their parents dream big."*



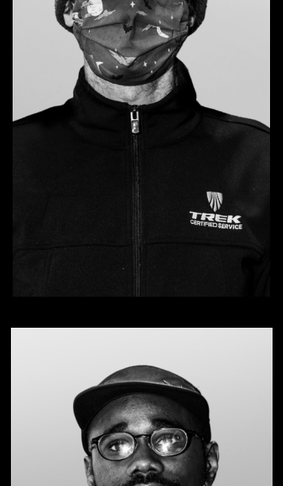






















# *Life, bikes, and the pursuit of happiness*

**LIFE Camp, Inc.** × **Tati Koufopanteli**

In the summer of 2020, Tati Koufopanteli attended a Bike Rides for Black Lives event in Brooklyn, NY, and was moved to tears.

"You couldn't even see the street," she says, describing the electricity of the crowd and the sound as hundreds of riders chanted the names of those we have lost at the hands of law enforcement.

"We must have ridden, like, 50 miles," she says. "But I didn't even feel it."

Tati left the event feeling inspired and immediately searched for ways to get involved. She reached out to Erica Ford, founder of LIFE Camp, Inc., a South Jamaica Queens-based violence prevention and intervention organization that had a hand in organizing the ride.

Erica founded LIFE Camp to help young people between the ages of 13 and 24 get educational, employment, and social opportunities they might not otherwise have. The org also focuses on providing youth and families with peaceful alternatives to violence.

"We believe a healthy mind and body creates a more peaceful community," Erica says regarding the group's mission.

Tati told Erica about her position at a local Trek store, and they started brainstorming ways the bike shop could help. After sharing ideas with employees at other NYC-based Trek shops, the women decided to start a service training program for kids involved with LIFE Camp.

Tati and her coworkers created a nine-week curriculum to teach youth how to assemble and repair bikes. The course involves attending classes at the shop, homework, and public speaking.

"For the younger kids it's really about understanding responsibility," Tati says. "We want to teach them things that will help them enter the workforce."

Growing up, Tati spent time in foster care and became an emancipated minor when she was 17 years old. She started working in order to provide for herself and was lucky enough to have managers and leaders who helped her excel. Their support and the structure these jobs provided helped Tati "stay on the right track" and gave her the confidence and motivation to achieve.

“It meant the world to finally feel like I was actually good at something,” she says. “I wanted to give that feeling to someone else.”

But Tati is also intimately familiar with the complexities that can thwart kids in underserved communities from attending a program like this.

Several of the students lived in communities without a local bike shop, so they were traveling about an hour to come to class every day. Tati arranged to have their transportation paid for. She also made sure the kids were provided a healthy breakfast and lunch, and that they went home with food as well.

*“A lot of these kids have to stay inside because their communities are very dangerous, so they don’t get to interact much with others,”* she says. *“That’s why it’s important we give them a space where they can come and learn.”*

But Tati had to make sure the kids showed up in the first place, and that they attended classes regularly. She knew she needed to have the right crew in place to make it happen.

“It’s a real challenge. These are at-risk youth,” Tati says. “For someone who isn’t aware of what that’s like, they might think these kids don’t care. But really they just need more support.”

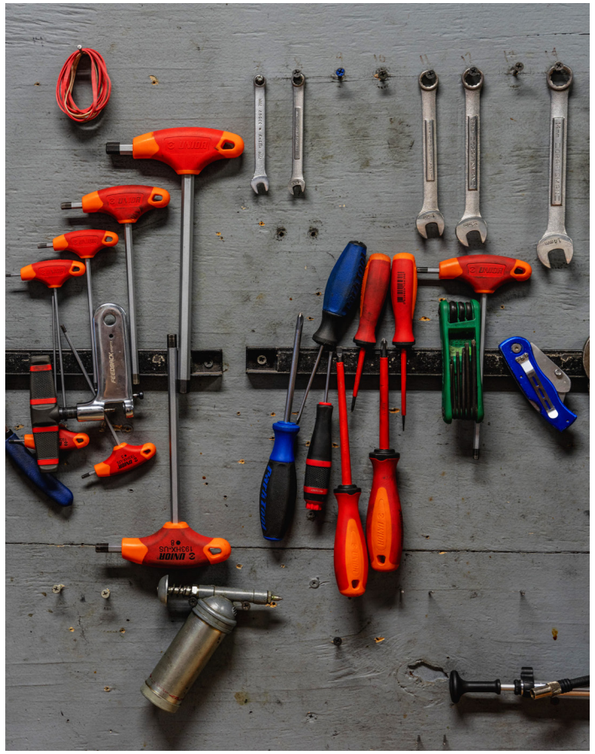
“Whoever was going to help had to be passionate about the project,” Tati says. “This isn’t one of those things where you just clock in and clock out.”

Tati assembled a team of employees from other Trek NYC shops who became mentors to the students in the bike service program. Each instructor had a student they were directly responsible for. They checked in with their mentee throughout the week, made house calls, held them accountable for attendance and classwork, and—most importantly—they let the kids know they would always be there for them.












The team also made sure to treat the kids like kids—a "courtesy" a lot of Black and brown youth aren't often granted. The team did its best to keep lessons fun so the students remain focused and engaged, and they often hosted bike rides at the end of each class.

"They especially love riding e-bikes," Tati says."They're just smiling from ear to ear."

For most of the students, this was their first introduction to cycling, another thing Tati could relate to. She has only been in the cycling industry for a little over a year and is struck by how transformative it has been.

*"I loved riding as a kid, but I didn't fully recognize the magnitude of it until recently,"* Tati says. *"It helps release some of my anxiety. I really enjoy the feeling of freedom that comes with riding a bike."*

Tati was also surprised by the community cycling provided her.

"Before I joined Trek, I didn't realize there are groups of people who actually come together and ride," she says. "I wanted to introduce these kids to that kind of community."

The first round of students in the LIFE Camp bike service program graduated on May 22, 2021. The graduates, who are between the ages of 16 and 22, were all offered jobs at their local Trek store and were surprised with brand-new bikes of their own.

In their new roles, they'll have the chance to work side by side with an on-the-spot technician and continue their training so they can ultimately become bike techs.

Tati is excited to see the program expanding to other cities across the country and looks forward to lending a hand as more bike shops adapt the curriculum to meet their community's needs.

The most important thing, Tati says, is for her fellow bike shop employees to actually get out into the community and talk to people. She also emphasizes the importance of partnering with an organization like LIFE Camp that already has credibility in underserved communities.

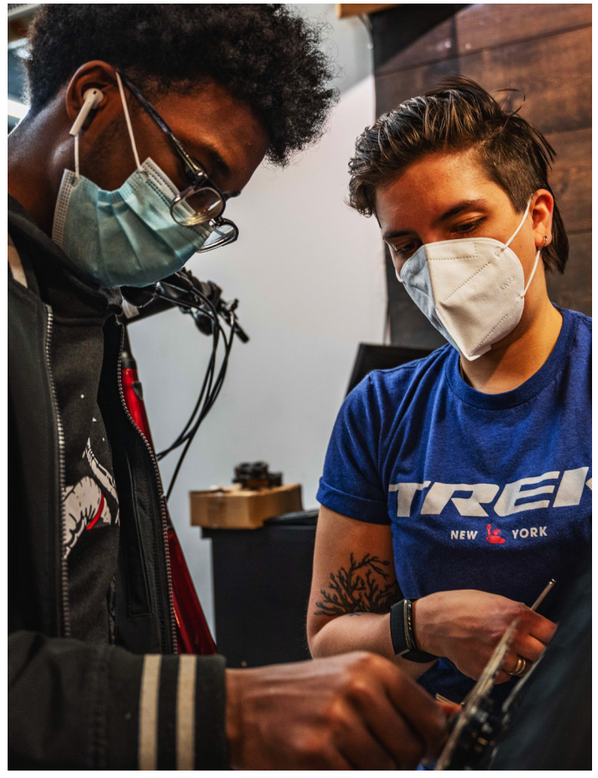
"Our mission statement is to change the world by getting more people on bikes," Tati says. "How can we use our bike shop to create good?"

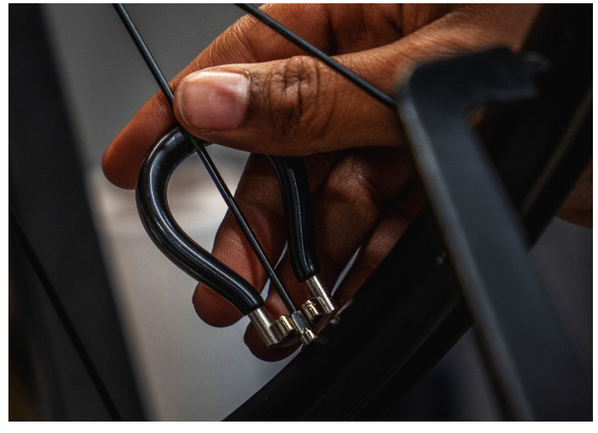


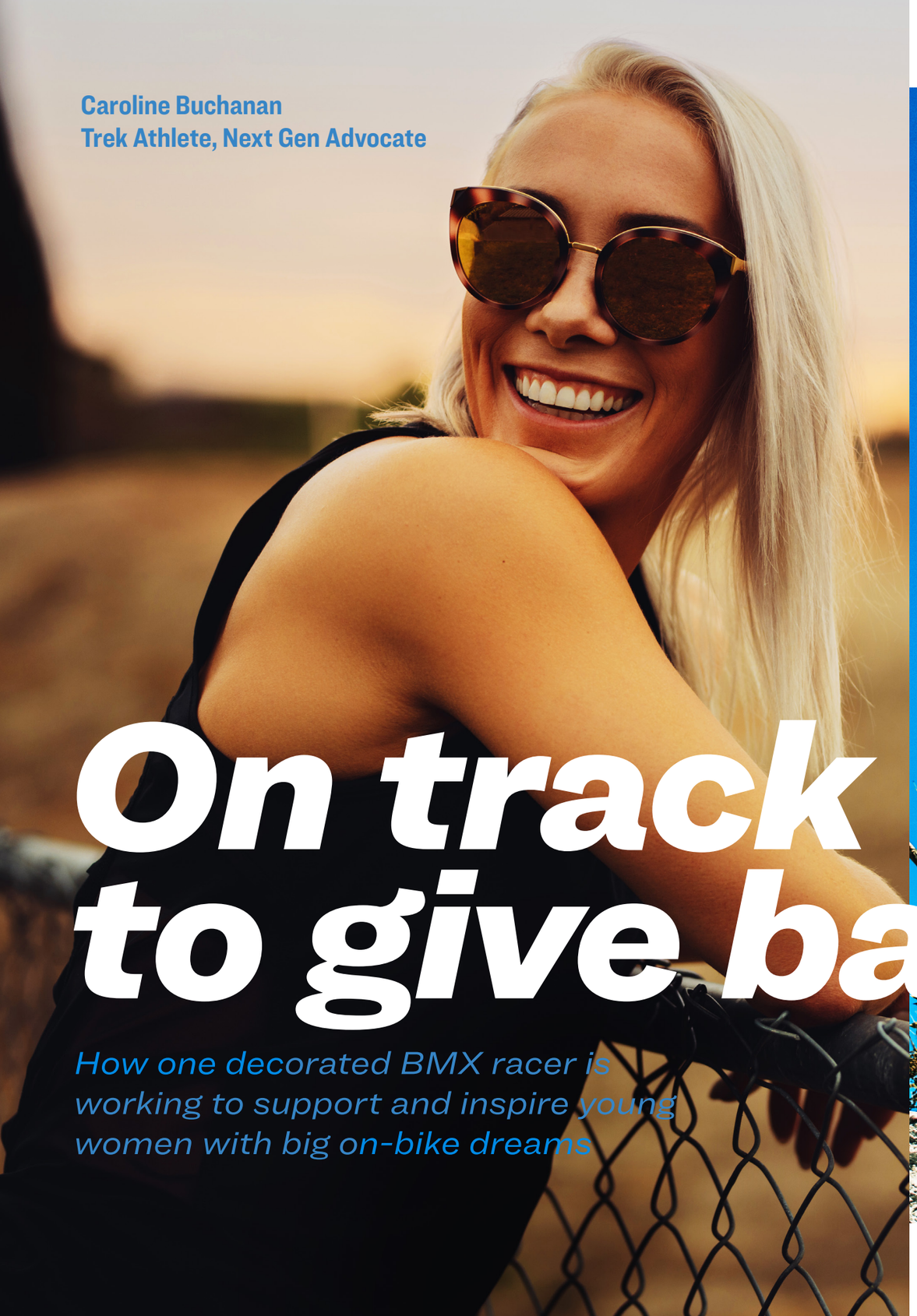










**Caroline Buchanan**
**Trek Athlete, Next Gen Advocate**

# On track to give back

*How one decorated BMX racer is working to support and inspire young women with big on-bike dreams*



Caroline Buchanan is a planner, but not in the sense you might think. Often, a “planner” is considered a cautious sort, someone with a severe aversion to spontaneous, potentially uncomfortable experiences. But Buchanan is the rare type who dives into uncharted territory, whose greatest nemesis is stagnation. She plans for discomfort.

*“If I find a goal that terrifies me and excites me, I know that I’m completely on track,” she said. “I’m excited to continue to push that.”*

For the next phase of her career, the five-time World Champion and two-time Olympic BMX rider wants to take on the world of freestyle mountain biking. To that end, Buchanan has been flinging herself off a nine-foot ramp that she built in her backyard.

Buchanan approaches everything with an uncommon enthusiasm. But the one thing that excites the Australian legend most of all is her Next Gen program, which gives scholarships to promising young women BMX and mountain bike riders. Not only do they receive $5,000 towards a project of their choice—like a backyard pump track or a ramp and airbag—but Buchanan also mentors the athletes, imparting years of wisdom.

“I’m going to teach them everything from how to be their own brand to how to invest in themselves and their goals,” Buchanan said. “At 14, these are not things that they’re aware of. So it’s really about building the whole brand of them. Then they’ll document their journey and I’ll continue to share that too.”

Buchanan is a consummate hustler, ever ready with a Plan A and a Plan B, and probably a Plan C and D, too. She imposes her own order within a chaotic environment, unafraid of the unexpected. Through Next Gen, she’s showing tomorrow’s star women riders that they, too, have nothing to fear.

# The legend of Mount Diablo

***Joe Shami** summited the same mountain every week for nearly twelve years in the quest to ride 100,000 miles on his 2004 Trek 5500—and through his journey to the time of his tragic passing, he became a close friend and pen pal to Trek President John Burke*

**Words by John Burke**

On December 19th, 2017, I received an email from a rider in Northern California by the name of Joe Shami. As it turns out, Joe was no ordinary Joe. He explained that he had purchased a Trek Project One in 2003 and he had ridden his prized bike up Mount Diablo for 496 consecutive weeks. He was 83 years old.

Mount Diablo is a famous climb in the Bay Area—12.4 miles long with 3,642 vertical feet of climbing. The steepest quarter mile is a 10.5% grade. It is a bear. I was really impressed and sent Joe a note back congratulating him on his accomplishments and asked if we could send out a marketing person to ride with him and record the historic 500th ascent of Mount Diablo. Joe made it up Mount Diablo for number 500 on January 14th, 2018.

Over the years, I exchanged over 40 emails with Joe. Joe would keep me up to date on his riding and on the condition of his bike and the condition of his body. Saddle sores, cataract surgeries, he shared it all—in detail.

On August 4th, 2020, I received a note from Joe that his Mount Diablo streak had ended at 615 straight weeks after 11 years and 43 weeks. He had suffered two flats on the same ride and had to stop. But he let me know that he still had one big goal out there.

“I am still aiming for 100,000 miles on my Trek,” he said.

I sent a note back: “Joe, if you make it to 100,000 miles, I am going to give you as a gift an e-road bike.”

Joe loved that idea and he would send me updates on all of his cycling adventures. One week, I responded to Joe, “Many thanks for the update. You are my hero. My wife and I did 11,350 feet of climbing on Saturday, but I am 58. When COVID clears up, it would be wonderful if you could visit me at Trek. I would love to have you as my guest.”

Joe continued to ride and sent me the following update on January 31st of this year: “Because of January storms and my saddle soreness January’s 850 miles is less than last December’s record of 949.”



In March, I asked Joe when he thought he would finish. On March 3rd, he responded with: “I’ll try to give you a more accurate finish date as time passes, but I certainly want to reach 100,000 miles before my 87th birthday on August 4th.”

I sent Joe a note on March 31st after one of his updates: “Joe, Thank you for the update. You are amazing and I hope to follow your example. Just make sure that you are taking care of yourself. There is no deadline to get to 100,000 miles. Let me know when the magical date might be. I plan on being there.” Joe and my assistant Cindy were finalizing the date. Earlier this month, on April 6th, Joe sent a note asking us to set a date in June or July.

That was the last time I heard from Joe.

On a Wednesday morning, I was working and I saw an email come through from someone in Northern California. It was a note to tell me that Joe Shami had been hit by an SUV while riding through a roundabout and had passed away. I read the note twice, I made a few phone calls to make sure, and I cried. I never met Joe, but I was lucky enough to speak with him on the phone five or six times.

I was his pen pal, and he was my hero.

I would hand Joe his new Project One e-road bike, which the designers at Trek had done an awesome job designing. I had approved the design the day before Joe died.

We would tell stories and everyone would want their picture with Joe, and then we would head down the hill. Dinner would ensue and then I would tell Joe that he was my hero, and I would say goodbye. We would stay in touch and he would tell me about all of the details of his new e-bike. He would fly out to Waterloo to visit Trek. We would become close friends. That is the way the movie was supposed to end.

Instead, I went to the Bay Area to ride up Mount Diablo with several hundred of his friends and fans to share our stories and memories. We talked about what a great guy Joe was, how Joe was a cycling legend, how Joe made biking safer for the 100,000 cyclists who ride Mount Diablo every year, and what we can do to make cycling safer for everyone across this country.

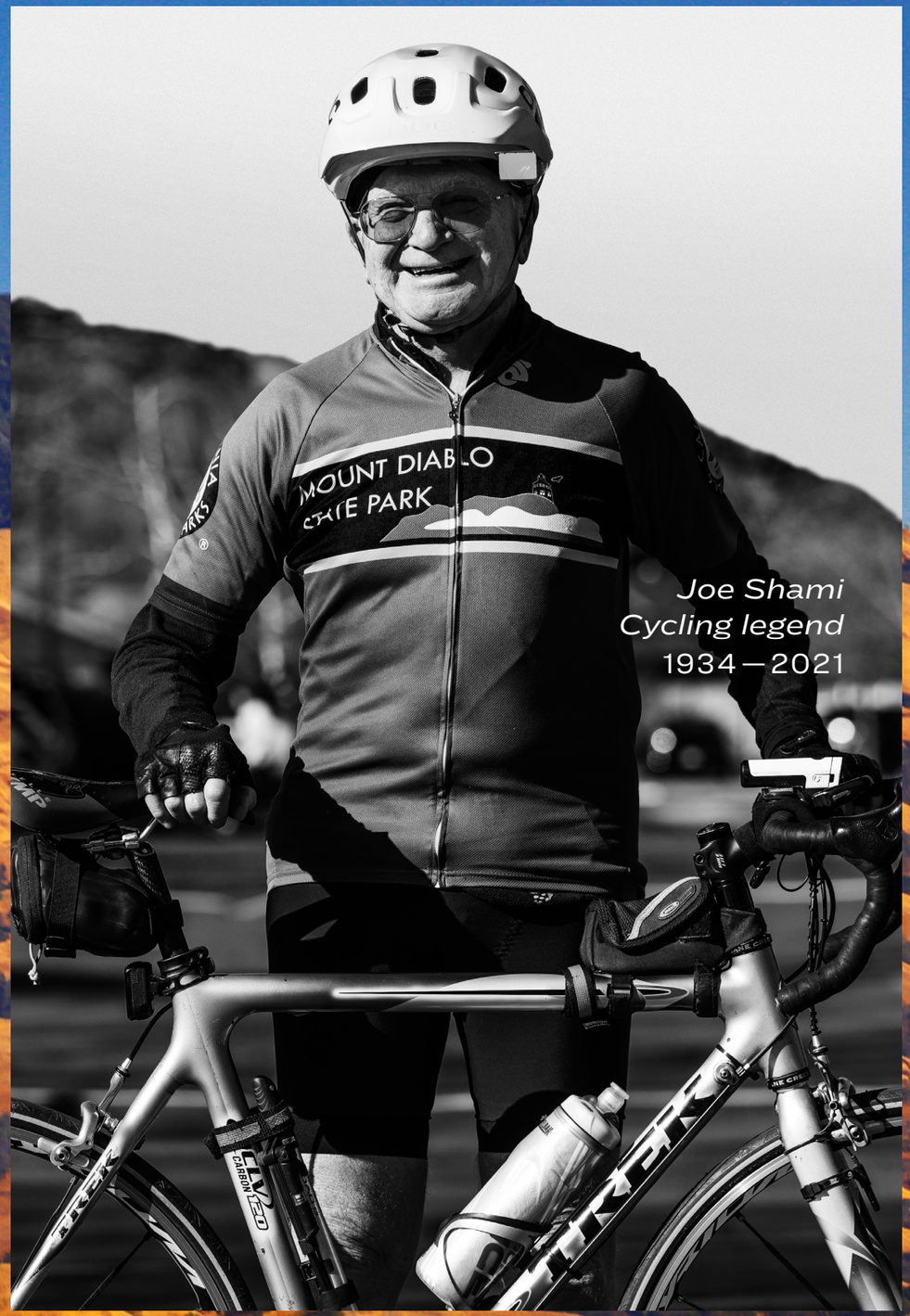
We also talked about how in 1971 the Netherlands had 3,300 cycling deaths caused by motor vehicles, 500 of which were children, and how the Netherlands used this tragedy to make transportation decisions that protected people who walk and people who ride bikes. Today in the Netherlands, over 20% of trips are taken by bike compared to 1% in the United States. Deaths by motor vehicle, which in 1975 was 20% higher in the Netherlands than in the United States, was 60% lower in the Netherlands than in the United States by 2008.

We talked about what we can do to honor Joe by making cycling safer on Mount Diablo, in California, in the United States, and on mountain climbs all over the world. Joe died doing what he loved, but he will long be remembered, and it is my prediction that his amazing life will inspire change that will make him proud and will make the world a better place.

I was looking forward to that historic ride with Joe. I had it in my mind: riding to the top of Mount Diablo on his Trek Project One, as we reach the summit Joe would hit 100,000 miles. We would have a cake at the top and a party to celebrate.

**Ride with us!** Join Trek and hundreds of cyclists on October 3 in Danville, California, for the Mount Diablo Challenge in memory of Joe Shami as we raise awareness and funding for safer cycling infrastructure on Mount Diablo and throughout Northern California.

To learn more and register
**visit mountdiablochallenge.org**



*How cycling's Casey Brown and Eliot Jackson are working to welcome more riders to the sport*

# Hand *in* hand

There's more to Casey Brown's 2021 competition bike frame than a fresh paint job. After George Floyd's killing last May, Brown reflected on how she could affect her own space—the predominantly white competitive mountain biking community—and help make it more welcoming to people of color. The hands painted on the frame represent the equality she would like to see within cycling and the world at large. More tangibly, she will also be giving away any prize money she wins on the bike this year, before auctioning off the frame and donating those proceeds as well.

All of the money will go to the Grow Cycling Foundation, which was founded last year by downhill mountain biker Eliot Jackson. Brown and Jackson, both 30, met early in their careers and have remained close friends since. When Brown reached out to him about raising money for the foundation, Jackson was honored.

"She just randomly messaged me and was like, 'This is what I want to do,'" Jackson laughs. "I think a lot of times we underestimate the individual impact that we can have, and the tools and resources that we have as individuals to make a difference, and I think Casey is the epitome of that."




Eliot Jackson, founder of Grow Cycling Foundation

Brown says she was inspired by Jackson, who spoke up about his experience as a Black athlete in mountain biking after witnessing the cycling community's reactions to the protests after Floyd's death. She rarely had conversations about race growing up in rural New Zealand and Canada, nor as she made a name for herself in her sport.

"I think George Floyd's death opened everyone's minds up a lot to the conversation," Brown says. "I would avoid the conversation before because it was awkward and scary. But now this is something we do need to talk about."

Brown's gumption mirrored Jackson's. About two months after conceiving of the Grow Cycling Foundation last June, Eliot Jackson had a website up and was raising money to build a pumptrack in Los Angeles. He came up with the idea with his friend Katie Holden, another former mountain biker, as he was processing Floyd's death and experiences from his own career.



Casey Brown, Trek C3 Project

"When I look back, I was the only Black person to start at a World Cup throughout my 10-year career," Jackson says. "I was so lucky that I happened to move to California, that I happened to have a way to get to these races, that I happened to ride BMX, and have a place to ride dirt jumps, and have friends introduce me to downhill. So you look back on your life and you're like, 'Man, this path that I took isn't available for everyone.'"

With Grow, Jackson wants to give diverse people the tools they need to pursue biking as a passion and career. A pumptrack was the perfect starting point. People who live in urban areas don't always have access to safe bike lanes, much less mountain roads and trails where many professional cyclists develop as young athletes. Pumptracks are compact and safe, giving kids room and security to hone their skills.

Grow's mission is three-fold: education, access, and opportunity. From that pumptrack, Jackson wants to create an ecosystem where new riders can not only discover cycling, but take advantage of resources that help them pursue careers in the industry. The foundation's other major initiative at the moment is a jobs board where opportunities are posted out in the open for anyone to see. Once the pumptrack is built, Jackson also wants to use the space for riding lessons and workshops.

"We want to build out these pathways where you never drop off, because I think a lot of the times people will donate a bike, or have a program, but after that program ends you're in the same spot as you were," Jackson says. "And so you're not actually enabling the community to do things for themselves. And I think that's really important for me. It's not about us coming in and just providing everything for people. It's about saying, 'OK, here are the tools, and if you want to use them, this is how you do it.'"

Both Jackson and Brown believe deeply in cycling's ability to build confidence, will power, and self-sufficiency. For example, there are many more women in mountain biking today because of people like Brown, who became a premiere athlete in the sport despite very few competitions offering women's classifications when she started. Though she doesn't see many people of color in cycling, she's optimistic that the nature of the sport can encourage it to become more diverse over time.

"I think unorganized sports—like rock climbing, running, cycling—are something that kids in every community can relate to because they can just go and do it," Brown says. "They don't have to wait for a team or pay money to be on a team, they can just grab their gear and go."

Jackson agrees, but first, he says, the cycling community has to become more welcoming. That is why the pumptrack is so important to him, because "whether you're a beginner or pro, or two years old or 90 years old, you can have fun." It's an all-inclusive space in a way that, say, skate parks often are not. To ride a pumptrack, you don't need a high skill level; you just need to be able to ride a bike.

That's not to say that cycling doesn't have barriers. New riders often feel overwhelmed by what they don't know or have. Maybe they're riding bald tires, wearing the wrong shoes, or unwittingly breaking a rule of the trail; whatever the case, Jackson wants the Grow Cycling Foundation to reinforce a culture of non-judgment. Anyone who wants to ride shouldn't ever feel discouraged.

"I think we in the cycling world have a very narrow definition of what a cyclist is, and as we spend more time here we kind of forget what it was like for us," Jackson says. "If we can be more welcoming to those beginners—no matter what color they are, what gender—and just create a more inviting environment, I think that will help so much because I think we've all had that experience of showing up to a group ride, bike shop, race, or wherever and feeling out of place."

"I think that is paramount to creating the culture where people can feel like they belong."




# GRIT and glory

*The triathlete fueled by passion to change the face of the sport*






Marcus Fitts is no stranger to going above and beyond to achieve his goals and uplift his community. He's the founder of not one, but two triathlon clubs in the DC-metro area working to increase the participation of people of color in multi-sports. Marcus himself competes in triathlon and aquabike events, runs his own graphic design business, and coaches several athletes—including many first-time triathletes.

The focus of his program, District Triathlon, is not only getting more athletes of color into triathlon and road riding, but also working "to promote active and healthy lifestyles in a safe community setting to underserved communities whose population experiences stagnant health challenges." To that end, the club holds many fun, high-energy community events like group workouts and clinics, Saturday morning runs, and more.

Marcus' second and most recent endeavor is GRIT USA, an acronym for Grinding Relentlessly Improves Talent. GRIT USA is an "adult and high school endurance and multi-sport development program that advances athletes to new limits, inspires communities, and enacts socio-cultural and economic change."

For his incredible work with the GRIT USA club, Marcus won the 2020 USA Triathlon Coach of the Year Community Impact Award, an accolade that "honors a coach or coaches who have demonstrated significant impact in their community, and who epitomize the USA Triathlon mission of growing and inspiring the triathlon/multisport community."

Marcus sums up what drives him to keep pushing and dreaming so passionately in a recent interview with Triathlon magazine:

"Representation is important, and we aim to ensure that people from every demographic feel included in this sport," Fitts said. "Creating inclusive spaces is critical, especially right now."




# Positively motivating

*Latoya Shauntay Snell is bringing new light to endurance sports*

Endurance athlete. Activist. Writer. Speaker. Ultra-marathoner. Cyclist. Chef. Chance-taker. Self-described recovering self-defeatist in motion. Doer of epic stuff. Soon-to-be IRONMAN-finisher.

New York-based Trek Brand Ambassador Latoya Shauntay Snell is so many things that it'd be impossible to do her life justice in a list. And this in itself is part of her power. She is the living, loving, riding, smiling embodiment that you don't have to be one thing only. Not for a second.

On her website Running Fat Chef, Latoya shares her candid life experience navigating the world of endurance sports as a proud, plus-sized athlete. Her writing motivates and welcomes, and it confronts the hate and shame that often keeps people from riding, running, and doing what they love with humor and positivity.

Latoya's Instagram (@iamlshauntay) is aglow with inspirational anecdotes, accessible workouts, and constant reminders to treat yourself with patience and grace. She shares meals, tells jokes, and discusses the good and bad days with the sincerity of a close friend.

As she once said in an article for The Root, *"I owe nobody an explanation for what moves me."* Latoya's message is gold, and we're going to say it even louder for anyone else who needs to hear: Neither. Do. You.



# Cam McCaul's museum of memories

*11 frames. 11 years. And the story of one awesome career.*



A row of 11 Trek frames line a wall in Cam McCaul's garage, each corresponding to one full year in his slopestyle career from 2004 to 2014. They reflect his best and worst moments—emphatic wins and daring video segments, bad crashes and injuries. Each captures a bit of who he was for a period of time.

Before McCaul decided to tell the story of each frame for an entry in his YouTube vlog, he didn't realize how many moments he'd forgotten. He would look at the frames every day and receive only flashes of memories. In digging up footage, sometimes digitizing old segments from DVDs, and editing the video, he made his history whole.

"I look back and I'm looking at an 18-year-old me who has no idea what's coming," McCaul says. "The bike riding is one part of it, but also just watching myself talk then, you're like, 'Woah, you're such a kid and you have so much to learn.'"

McCaul is 35 now, an "old man" in the context of slopestyle and freeride mountain biking. And yet, the contours of his career align neatly with the history of the sport. He was a teenager when slopestyle was in its infancy. The first bike he shows off in the video is a Session 77 that Trek made custom for him because the company didn't have a line of slopestyle bikes yet. He took it on the mountain bike TV show "Drop In" and chucked it across British Columbia, making a name for himself with his showmanship and sunny personality, while also showing off the progenitor to the Ticket S.



Cam's favorite bike is his Remedy from 2006, which was a breakout year for him. It featured in one of his favorite video segments, the opening of "New World Disorder VII," and won a number of contests. Its polished mirror finish still shines through the dents and scratches from a year well-seized. The frame was always dearest in McCaul's heart, but doing the video helped him remember the sheer volume of its history.

*"It blew me away to think about how much used to take place in just one calendar year's time,"* McCaul says. *"As you go on, there's less because some of those years were filled with injuries. Sometimes you come back and do a contest, or just get healthy enough to do a film segment, and that's like the thing you did in a year."*

The video editing process helped put his career in perspective. McCaul found that his most lasting memories often weren't the contest results that had seemed so important at the time. Who he is today is an amalgamation of the pieces he felt worth keeping. His YouTube vlog is a trove of carefree fun that feels distinct to him, featuring day-long adventures, creative challenges with friends, and glimpses of his everyday life.

Along with helping McCaul remember what he has forgotten, the video helped him see bits of his old self that he still recognizes today, mannerisms and inflections in the way he talks that he has not only kept, but passed on to his two kids. It's the same with the frames, he points out. A 2014 Ticket S doesn't look much like a jerry-rigged 2004 Session 77, but they are inextricably linked through a long process of determining what was worth holding onto.

"You look at how just antique the first frame looks, and then how polished the ones at the end look, and to think that the ones at the end you can actually just order up and buy," McCaul says. "I think it says a lot not only about Trek's development of that frame and their willingness to embrace that side of the sport at such an early time, but also just the progression of the sport."



McCaul hadn't anticipated that making the video would be so cathartic. The idea for the video was borne in part from the fact that his hometown of Bend, Ore., was too cold and snowy to do the type of riding he typically does on his YouTube channel. But the process of editing the video gave him time and space to reflect on how far he's come since hopping on the "Drop In" bus at 18 years old.

"At that time you're focused on certain things, and the big picture isn't one of them," McCaul says. "I think I'd be really proud to see that mountain biking has grown, and trail riding has gotten more and more aggressive. I feel like the influence of slopestyle and free ride has had a big effect on the way people ride, and that has had an effect on the way companies develop the bikes."

"I would be really excited to see that it's still a thing. And not only is it a thing, it's bigger than we could have ever imagined."

# Why Kiel Reijnen ran 18 miles on gravel—*without shoes*—in a bike race he knew he couldn't win




Gravel racing is unforgiving. UNBOUND Gravel's premiere event is 200 miles and roughly 10 hours (if you're really, really fast) across rocks and ruts. Mechanical issues are likely, if not inevitable. And unlike in road racing, there are no team cars to give you a wheel if something goes wrong.

Gravel racers are responsible for their own repairs unless they can find a fellow competitor willing to lend a hand. For the most part, they're on their own.

Trek-Segafredo's Kiel Reijnen learned that lesson the hard way.

Just under 30 miles into the race, he caught his rear rim on a rock while riding through a technical section within a crowded lead group. It was an unfortunate hit—the wrong rock in exactly the wrong place—and the damage put the wheel out of commission. He tried to repair it, and fashioned a splint, but the quick fix only lasted a kilometer and a half before the bike became unrideable again.

So with roughly 170 miles to go—and still nearly 40 miles until the first checkpoint—Reijnen started running. In his socks.

If you've ever tried running a long distance in road cycling shoes, you'll understand why he chose to ditch them. The stiff, slick-bottomed carbon soles make for great power transfer on the bike, but don't flex like a running shoe or provide the kind of traction you'd want for this terrain.

Kiel's hopes for a podium were dashed, that much he'd accepted early on, but he was driven by something more meaningful than any trophy: honor.

"My first instinct was just, 'I don't care what happens, I'm going to figure out a way to finish," Reijnen said. "I also said at the beginning of the day that things happen out there and everybody ends up with a story, and I just felt an obligation to give my all before I threw in the towel, to honor the race and also to represent the spirit of gravel racing."

Reijnen ran nearly 18 miles, hoping that along the way another competitor with mechanical issues might be able to lend him a new wheel. Initially, he shouldered the bike, before eventually bending the wheel straight enough to roll the bike as he ran.



“I was clever enough [after about 15 minutes] to realize I could stick my insoles inside my socks, and they gave me some barrier between the rocks and my feet. But it was brutal, and I don’t really know what I was thinking,” Reijnen said. “I mean when the wheel first failed, I thought I could limp there. And then when it really catastrophically failed shortly thereafter, I just told myself that if I ran steady maybe I would make it. I was clearly lying to myself, but I tried anyway.”

After three and a half hours, when he had fallen behind the last place rider and reality dawned that he wouldn’t have enough water to safely get to the checkpoint (much less finish ahead of the cutoff time), Reijnen realized he had to leave the race. He flagged down a passing vehicle and got a ride back to safety and comfort.

He was disappointed that he couldn’t earn a result that reflected his capability, but the adversity did give him a unique opportunity to see and interact with the full spectrum of UNBOUND’s participants. More than 900 riders took the start line for the 200-mile race, and the group at the front was very different from the one at the back.

“I think the most positive moment of my day was being that far behind and seeing all the people who are really at the back of the race, and their mentality,” Reijnen said. “Every single one of them offered me help. There was just a level of camaraderie amongst that group that reminded me why gravel racing is special.”

Gravel racing is still a burgeoning sport, but it has separated itself among cycling disciplines because of its emphasis on inclusivity, sportsmanship and self-sufficiency. Above all, races like UNBOUND are about achieving personal goals and generating memories. Prior to the race, Reijnen phrased his goal as thus: “The first question I hope that I get asked, or that I would want to ask somebody at UNBOUND, isn’t, ‘What place did you come in?’ It’s, ‘How did it go out there? What happened?’”

As a professional athlete, results matter to Reijnen. But as consolation prizes go, having an inspiring story to tell is pretty good, especially while competing in a discipline that is still solidifying its identity.

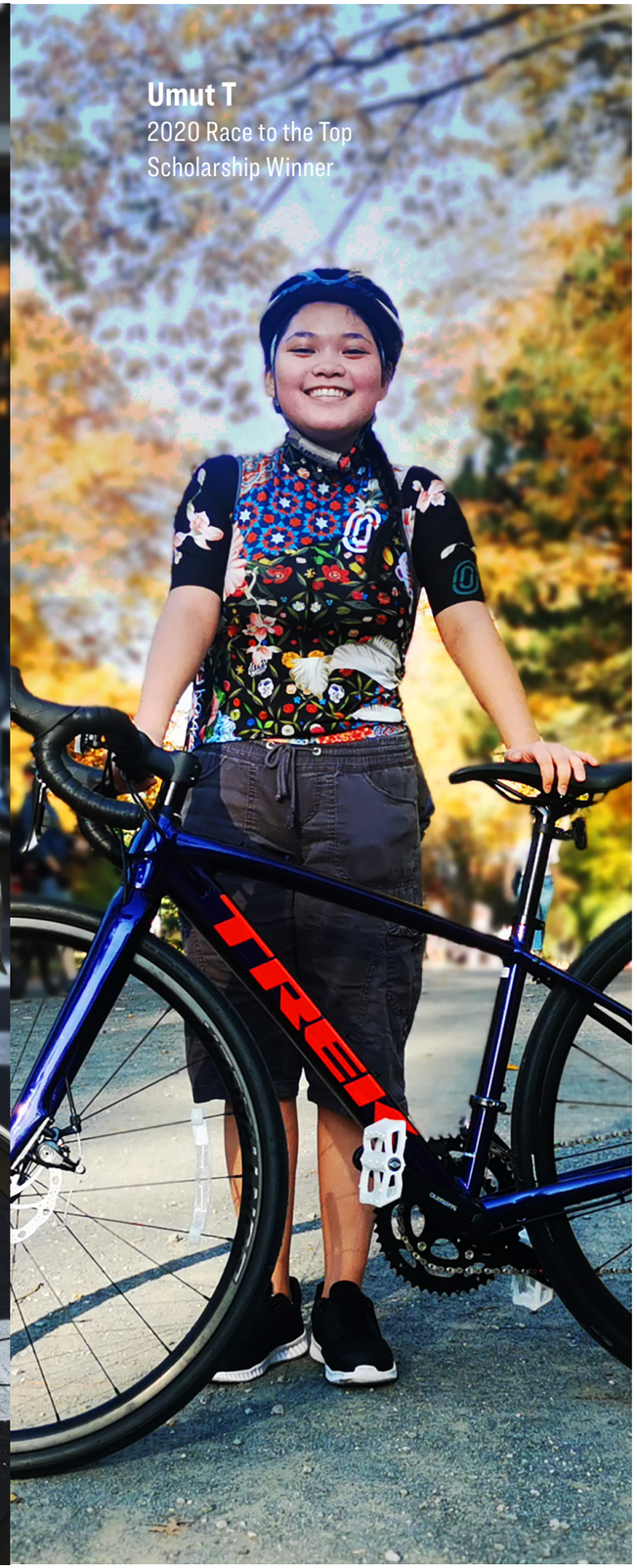
That Saturday in June was perhaps the biggest day yet in gravel racing’s young life. Reijnen said the nervous energy at the line was “palpable” for the first UNBOUND in two years. And on that big day, Reijnen’s example of perseverance reinforced the traits that make gravel racing so fast growing and beloved.

There are few sports in or out of the cycling ecosystem where how you play matters so much. Reijnen proved that, and now he’s hungry for another chance in 2022.

“That’s the beauty of sports, right? If you get it wrong, you get another shot, generally speaking,” Reijnen said. “So I am really determined to go back and have a different outcome. And I hope the same for all the other people who had tough days or didn’t achieve their goals. That they also feel inspired to go back and try again. “I think that will be a good lesson going forward, that no matter what happens in the race, you can still be positive.”






# Up, up, and away

*The NYC-based bike instructor paving the way for a new generation of road riders*

Aliya Barnwell is on a mission to create access where it's lacking. As president of non-profit Ride Up Grades, she's working to open the sport of road cycling to more communities by providing support, equipment, and structure.

And through this, she's confronting and dismantling a piece of cycling culture that isn't doing our sport any good. "Pursuing cycling requires a lot of gear, and that can foster some elitism," she says. "I'm a roadie, so I realize the discipline of road riding has some serious problems—there is often unanimous agreement that we roadies are the least welcoming of the bunch, the most exclusive."

But Aliya is promoting a more inclusive vision and a better future, where anyone with an interest can get into road cycling—expensive gear or not.

Through scholarship programs, group rides, instruction, bike donations, and free bike camps, Ride Up Grades is paving a pathway for entry to a sport that's been historically difficult to pursue. And by breaking down this barrier, Ride Up Grades is allowing teenagers and families to have fun, experience more, and build self-confidence that will stay with them for life.

To learn more, **visit rideupgrades.org.**











## *Trek Travel's Guide of the Year explains the magic behind turning* ***"I like to ride"*** *into* ***"I love to ride"***

If there's one thing we could all use after the last year, it's a vacation. Well, Trek Travel is a little more than just a vacation. Vacations all come to an end. But a Trek Travel vacation is actually a beginning—the beginning of a deeper relationship with your companion, yourself, and riding a bike. At the center of that experience are the people responsible for fanning those sparks into flames: the Trek Travel Guides.

INC. Magazine once wondered about Trek Travel, "Is this the world's toughest hiring process?" and for good reason. Only those dedicated to ensuring every moment of a guest's experience has the potential to create an everlasting memory make the cut. And at the end of the year, there's always one guide who stands out as Guide of the Year.

In 2020, that guide was Zack Jones. Zack's trips cover thousands of miles, and every detail between the start and the finish is meticulously considered. Because at the heart of Zack's work is the belief that the world is a better place when more people are in love with riding their bike.

"Guiding was a totally accidental career," he says. "I studied photography in college and heard about a really intense hiring event for bicycle tours. It sounded like a nice way to get a free three-day camping trip, but I had never ridden more than 20 miles in my life. I had nothing to lose and actually landed the job. It's been 18 years since then and it's been an amazing journey."

His philosophy in guiding is the same as his philosophy when he travels: be as local as possible. "I spend a lot of time immersing myself in a destination—the food, the people, the local businesses, community events—so that I'm not seen as just a tourist," he says. "I try to uncover the hidden gems and experience the culture from the inside, understand the natural and cultural history that influences how people live and understand the story of every place I go. That's the stage I want my guests to enter into when they arrive. To feel like a local and return home richer than they arrived."

For Zack, there's an immense value in sharing these magical places with his colleagues and guests.

"In the end, the people are what makes the work special," he says. "That may seem contrived, but guiding is a hard job, and you don't go into it if you're not a people person."

Though every Trek Travel trip spans a distance of miles and days (or sometimes weeks), he sees his work as an invitation that never expires. "A Trek Travel trip is a cycling vacation, and you can ride as much or as little as you want. But one thing I've learned over 18 years is that the more you ride while you're with us, the more you'll ride when you get home. And that's a beautiful thing."

While Zack is stepping back a little in 2021 to focus on adding Father of the Year status to his accolades, you'll be able to catch him next year.

And in the meantime, you can experience the best Trek Travel has to offer with a future Guide of the Year! Check out profiles of all the inspiring guides and explore options for your cycling vacation of a lifetime—including newly opened trips to Europe—at **trektravel.com**.

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