

Come on! Rediscover the joys of riding a bike

GET OUT!

KEN MCCALL



I guess I've loved to ride a bike ever since my dad let go of my seat on the sidewalks of Pat-

terson Park.

Well, maybe it was after I crashed into that tree on Berkshire Boulevard a few minutes later.

At first, it was just the rush of wind in my face and the wonder that I wasn't falling down. But very soon my bike brought the pride of owning my own wheels, the freedom of controlling my transportation destiny — and the joy of getting there faster.

(As a kid, you don't think about how good your muscles feel pushing the pedals and how your heart and lungs are pumping you up with the exercise. That comes later.)

I first began bike commuting when we moved to Mad River Road in Washington Twp. a few years later. We lived about a mile from Dr. John Hole Elementary, and I found I liked riding my bike a lot more than the bus. I also got home a lot faster.

(I wouldn't let a kid ride on Mad River now, of course, but that's a different story.)

Later, in my early teen years, the bike became a workhorse. My trusty Schwinn (with an "automatic" three-speed) and I delivered the *Dayton Daily News* for three years. Looking back, riding a bike year-round every day for that long — though I wasn't always thrilled about it at the time — probably cemented the bond.

I even commuted occasionally the four or so miles to Centerville High School, though it's apparently not cool, I'm told, to do so any more.

After college, I rediscovered the bike for purely recreational purposes. I'd use it to get out in the California countryside and go fast for a couple hours.

For some reason, it wasn't until a few years ago, after moving back to Ohio, that I started getting on the bike instead of into the car with any frequency.

Now, though I still ride for pleasure on the weekends, the days when I can ride to work are among the highlights of my week. It's not because I'm saving money or helping the environment or burning calories, though I'm doing all of those.

It's because riding my bike is fun and makes me feel good. It's a mini-adventure at the beginning of the day. I get to work feeling refreshed, alert, in a great mood and raring to go.

I just don't get that from driving. You probably don't either, I'm guessing.

So, if you've ever thought about bike commuting, next week — National Bike to Work Week — is the time to give it a try, because the regional Drive Less Live More program is offering incentives for those who do.

Beginning next Friday, May 18, the campaign is launching its One Less Trip contest. All you have to do is use some form of alternative transportation for four trips over the next four weeks to win a four-night trip to the Island House Hotel on Mackinac Island, Mich., where cars are not allowed.

You can register online at www.drivelesslivemore.org. Prizes also will be given for the most miles biked, bused, walked, carpooled and total miles not driven alone.

And next Friday — National Bike to Work Day — the campaign is kicking things off with a pancake breakfast from 6:30 to 9 a.m. at 2nd Street Public Market.

It's a chance to get a guilt-free maple syrup sugar rush, and, just maybe, rediscover the joys of riding a bike.

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