



Shane Ayrsmann and Ben Leonard, owners of Revolution Cycles.

KELLY O'BRIEN

Recycling Cycles

Revolution is in the air.

New bike shop takes new approach.

In a world of SUVs, cars and trucks, Eugene remains a haven for bicyclists, its city map overlaid with an extensive network of bike paths. And cruising along those paths is every variety of biker, from the hardcore tandem teams to the casual cyclists with three-speed cruisers.

With the growth of the cycling community comes the growth of an appropriate support structure. Namely, a whole slew of retail shops catering to bike enthusiasts. Among them are Paul's Bicycle Way of Life, Hutch's, High Street, Collins, Eugene Bicycle Works, Blue Heron, REL, Wheelworks, Equinox, the Center for Appropriate Transport, and others.

New to the fold, however, is Revolution Cycles. You may wonder why young shop-owners Shane Ayrsmann and Ben Leonard felt Eugene needed another bike shop. But upon setting foot inside the modest, Blair Boulevard business it becomes quite clear that

Revolution Cycles is different.

Just three months old, the shop is located in an orange cinder block building at 296 Blair. The store interior is somewhat Spartan, as bike shops go: A single pegboard wall displays their small assortment of bike accessories and the only real decoration is the bicycle that hangs in the front window — a Crawford ladies bicycle, circa 1896. Complete with wooden tire rims and decaying rubber tires, the antique bicycle not only adds to the shop's

character, but also says something about the owners' vision.

"I use it as a sales tool," says Ayrsmann, who feels that the technology of bikes has not changed much in the last century. "It's mostly all the little parts that have changed — the frame is basically the same," he says.

Ayrsmann and Leonard deal in remanufactured bikes. Used bikes come in from all over — they'll buy them from their customers, find them at garage sales and even pick some up from other recycling places, such as BRING. Once they've adopted the bikes, they strip them down, discard the old and broken "little parts" and replace them with new ones.

Once ride-able, the bikes go out onto the floor and complete the picture of the shop. Along the walls stand lines of bicycles, usually around 35 or 40, that Ayrsmann and Leonard have restored to their former glory, or to a new glory altogether.

"Most bike shops have 20 or 30 of the same bike," says Ayrsmann. "Here, it's what you see on the floor and you may not see one of those ever again."

That variety and the versatility of Leonard and Ayrsmann has made the shop very successful so far.

It also helps that the Revolution bicycles are considerably cheaper than their mainstream counterparts. New bicycles at Paul's start at about \$220 and run as high \$6,000, but Ayrsmann says they sell basic reconditioned bikes for around \$100 and the most expensive they've sold was \$1,300.

But Ayrsmann feels that good prices are not the key factor to their success. Instead, he credits their approach to selling their rebuilt bikes.

"When it comes right down to it, it's only right if it's right," says Ayrsmann, who has a

passion for customer service as well as bicycles. He says he will stand and chat with customers about the weather for 20 minutes before they even get around to talking about bikes. And when it does come around to bikes, he has his customers ride a few around the block, makes adjustments and makes sure it's the right fit. Ayrsmann says "the used car salesman approach" happens in some bike shops, but that he's going for something different.

"My take on this is you have to sell yourself before you sell your product," he says. "And, honestly, no one knows that."

Both Leonard and Ayrsmann have long histories as bicycle gurus, and are ex-mechanics from Paul's Bicycle Way of Life. When they found they had topped out at Paul's, they decided to go into business for themselves.

"Nobody's really doing this," says Leonard, "definitely not the way we're doing it. We saw that niche and we filled it."

It seems, given today's economic climate, starting your own business would be a struggle. But according to Leonard, that has not been the case.

"The shop is totally supporting itself," he says. "It took one very minimal loan [to start up] and from what we've made already we could pay that off."

Leonard and Ayrsmann themselves are trying to get the shop solidly self-sufficient before they really try to make any money.

"We paid ourselves some this month," Leonard says with a smile. "But most of it goes right back into the shop."

Ayrsmann laid out their long-term goals: "What we want to be able to do is to walk away, have a salary for each of us, have a nice bank account build up for the business so it can support itself," he says. **EW**

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